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INTRODUCTORY LESSONS
ON
CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES.

BY
Richard
ARCHBISHOP WHATELY.

FIRST AMERICAN
FROM THE TENTH LONDON EDITION.



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PREFACE TO AMERICAN EDITION.

THE Middlesex Sunday School Association appointed, in May, 1849, a Committee, which, in October, 1849, offered a Report, through their chairman, Rev. H. A. Miles, of Lowell, which report was accepted. The report recommends the adoption in each Sunday School of a fixed series of text-books, through which each scholar shall be expected to study during the term of his connection with the schools. This series should consist first of Hymns, and a simple Catechism, then Questions on the New Testament, afterward on the Old Testament History, to be followed by books on Natural Theology, the Evidences of Christianity, the

Peculiar Evidences for the Gospels, Christian Ethics, Digested Doctrine, and Practical Piety.

The same Association had previously appointed a Committee on Manuals, by whose advice the following little book, received with great favor in England, is now republished, as suitable to take a place in the above mentioned series. Although beyond doubt the work of Archbishop Whately, yet as it is published in England anonymously, the American Editor has felt at liberty to alter the language in many places where he conceived it made a *display* of condescension to the child's capacity. He has also altered some of the references, so as to refer to what he conceives much more pertinent passages of Scripture.

WALTHAM, MAY, 1850.

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CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES.

LESSON I.

FIRST RISE OF CHRISTIANITY.

§ 1. SUPPOSING you were asked the question how you came to be a Christian, perhaps you would answer that it is because you were born and brought up in a Christian country, and that your parents were Christians, and had taught you to believe that the Christian religion is true. And if, again, your parents were asked the same question, perhaps they might give the same answer. They might say, that their parents had brought them up as Christians; and so on.

But you know that it cannot always have been so. You know that the Christian religion had a beginning. You know that the disciples of Jesus Christ, and their followers, went about among various nations, making converts to his religion, among people who had been worshippers of the Sun and Moon,

and of various false gods. Our forefathers were among those nations. In former days, the people of these Islands were what we call Heathen, or Pagans; that is, worshippers of a number of supposed gods, whom they believed to govern the world, and to whom they offered sacrifices and prayers. We have among us a kind of monument of this, in the names of the days of the week; each day having been sacred to some one of their gods. Thus, the first day of the week, which we sometimes call the Lord's day, in honor of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, still keeps also the name of Sunday, from its having been dedicated, in former times, to the worship of the Sun: as Monday was to the Moon; Tuesday to Tuesco, the god of war; Wednesday to Woden; Thursday to Thor, and so of the rest.

Now our forefathers, who were worshippers of these gods, would have told any one who might have questioned them on the subject, that this was the religion of their country, and what they had learned from their parents. And at the present day, there are many nations still in the same condition with our forefathers; among others, great numbers of our fellow-subjects in the British dominions, in the East Indies, have been brought up as Pagans, and worship various false gods. And, again, there are many who are followers of Mohammed, whom they hold to be a prophet superior to Jesus Christ.

§ 2. Now what I want you to consider is this:

Have you any better reason for believing in the truth of the Christian religion, than a Mohammedan has for believing in his religion, or the Pagans in theirs? And do you think you can learn, and ought to learn to give some better reason? They believe what their parents have told them, merely for that reason, and because it is the religion of their country, and the wisest men of the nation have told them it is true. If you are content to do the same, then, though there may be a great difference between your religion and theirs, there is no difference at all in the grounds of your belief and of theirs. If ten persons, for example, all hear different accounts of some transaction, and each believes just what he happens to hear from his next neighbor, then, if nine of those accounts are false, and one true, he who chances to have heard the true one, is right only by accident, and has no better grounds for his belief than the rest. In the same manner, if several different persons hold each the religion of their fathers, and have no other reason for doing so, than because it is the religion of their fathers, then, though one of them may happen to believe a true religion and the rest false ones, it is plain he has no better grounds for his belief than they. What he believes may be in itself right; but we cannot say that he is more right in so believing it, than the others are in believing as they do.

§ 3. Now do you think it is the duty of each man

to keep to the religion of his fathers, without seeking any proofs of its being true, but satisfied with merely taking it on trust, because his teachers have told him so? If so, our forefathers would have been wrong in renouncing their Pagan religion, and embracing Christianity. They had been brought up in the worship of the Sun, and Moon, and Woden, and their other gods; and so had the ancient Greeks, and Romans, to whom the Apostles preached. This had been the long-established religion of their country, handed down to them from their forefathers, many of whom were great statesmen, and wise and learned writers; and if this had been a sufficient reason for their keeping to it without inquiry, they would have been bound to reject the Gospel, and continue Pagans.

And this we know is what many of them did; refusing to listen to the Apostles and others, who offered them proof that the Christians had "not followed cunningly-devised fables in making known to them the coming and power of the Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Peter i. 16.) Now we cannot think these men acted more wisely than those Pagans who set themselves to inquire what was true, and who did embrace Christianity.

§ 4. These last must have had strong reasons for doing as they did. It could not have been from love of change for its own sake, or mere idle whim; for we know that many of them had to face ridicule,

and blame, and sometimes persecution, from their friends and countrymen. And, what is more, they had to change their mode of life, and to renounce, on becoming Christians, many evil habits which had been tolerated in the Pagan religions. For we find the Apostles, — Paul especially, — speaking often of the abominable vices in which the Pagans had been accustomed to indulge, and which the converts to Christianity were required to abstain from.

Now it must be a difficult thing for a man to bring himself to throw off (as the early converts to Christianity must have done) his early habits, and his veneration for the gods of his country, in whose worship he had been brought up, and his reverence for wise, and illustrious, and powerful men among his countrymen, and his regard for the good opinion of his neighbors, and also his care for his own peace and safety. Yet all this must have been done by many of those of our forefathers and other Pagans, who first embraced the Christian religion. They must, therefore, have had a strong conviction of the truth of the religion; not from their having been brought up in it, as you were; for it was quite the contrary with them; but for some other reason. They must have had some convincing evidence of its truth; or else we may be sure they would not have received it.

And these men could not have been convinced of the truth of the Gospel by any such *experience* as

many Christians have of that inward consolation and peace of mind, and enlightening of the understanding, produced by their religion : which affords them a satisfactory assurance of its coming from God. ' *For those who had not embraced Christianity could not have had this experience.* And yet some convincing proofs they must have had, to lead them to embrace it, in spite of so many prejudices, and so many difficulties.

§ 5. And it appears that they were taught by the Apostles not only to *have* a reason, but also to be able to *give* a reason to others, for the faith which they held. Be "ready always, (says the Apostle Peter,) to give an answer [or defence] to every one that asketh a reason of the hope that is in you." And it does certainly seem very fair that they should be asked by their neighbors, and should be expected to answer the question, "*Why* do you renounce the gods of the country, and embrace the religion of this Jesus, and call on us to do the same?" This, I say, would appear a very fair question to be asked of persons living in the midst of Pagans, and educated as such.

But perhaps you may think this was not at all intended to apply to you who have had the happiness of being brought up in a Christian country. You should remember, however, that you may some time or other chance to meet with some of these Pagans, or Mohammedans, whom we have been speaking of;

to some of whom we have sent missionaries to convert them. And besides this, you may hereafter meet with persons of our own nation, who doubt or disbelieve the truth of Christianity; and their doubt or disbelief is likely to be very much strengthened, if they find that you have no better reason for being Christians, than the Turks have for being Mohammedans; the ancient Greeks and Romans for worshipping Jupiter; or our own forefathers for serving Thor and Woden; namely, that such is the religion of the country. They will be apt to say, "These religions cannot be all true; but they may be all equally false; they are, perhaps, only so many different forms of superstition, in which the people of different countries have been brought up, and which they all believe in, each because they have been brought up in it, without seeking for any other reason."

§ 6. The Apostle's direction, therefore, you may be sure, applies to all Christians in every age and country. It is needful for all of them to be able to give a reason of the hope that is in them. And among others, you may give as one reason, what I have just put before you; that those who first embraced Christianity, renouncing for it, as they did, their early prejudices, and their habits, and often their friends, and their comfort, and safety in this world, must have had some strong evidence to convince them that it was true. It is not merely from

the Christian writers of the New Testament that we learn how much those persons had to bear and to do who embraced the Gospel ; heathen writers record the persecutions under which they suffered. We may be sure, even from the very nature of the case, how great their difficulties must have been. And therefore we could feel no doubt, that when they did become Christians, it must have been on some strong reasons, even though we had no knowledge what these reasons were.

It is possible for us, however, to inquire, and to learn what the reasons were which satisfied them of the truth of the religion. And it must, therefore, be a duty for all who have the opportunity, to learn what proofs it rests on ; that they may be “ ready to give an answer to those that ask them a reason of their hope.” And you should observe, also, that the Apostles not only required their converts to be ready to give a reason, but must themselves have *supplied* them with reasons ; since they could not have made them converts, without offering proofs to satisfy them that the religion was true.

And this is one point which distinguishes the Christian Religion from those of the Pagans ; for *it does not appear that any of these religions ever made any appeal to proof*, or claimed to be received except from their being the ancient established belief of the country. *The Christian Religion was brought in*, in opposition to all these, *by means of*

the reasons given — the evidence, which convinced the early Christians that the religion did truly come from God. It must therefore be the duty of Christians to learn what that evidence is.

LESSON II.

FAITH AND CREDULITY.

§ 1. OUR forefathers, and the other Pagans who embraced the Gospel, must have had some strong reasons, to bring them to shake off their habits of life, their early prejudices, and their veneration for the gods they had been brought up to worship, for the sake of Christ and his religion, which were new to them. But perhaps you may suppose that their ancient religions also must have been embraced by their forefathers in the same manner; that the worship of the Sun, and Moon, and Jupiter, and the rest of their gods, must have been first brought in by strong proofs, — at least by what were thought to be strong proofs.

But this does not appear to have been the case. We have no accounts of the first origin of the Pagan religions; and it is likely that no one of them was ever brought in all at once; but that these various superstitions crept in by little and little, and religion

became gradually corrupted, as men lost more and more that knowledge of the one true God, which we suppose to have been originally revealed. This, at least, is certain, that it was not even pretended that these religions rested on any evidence worth listening to. A Pagan's reason for holding his religion is, and always was, that it had been handed down from his ancestors. They did, indeed, relate many miracles, said to have been wrought through their gods; but almost all of these they spoke of as having been wrought among people who were *already* worshippers of those gods; not as having been the means of originally bringing in the religion. And all the Pagan miracles they believed merely because these were a part of the religion which they had learned from their fathers. They never even pretended to give any proof that these miracles had ever been performed.

§ 2. The pretended prophet Mohammed did indeed found a new religion, which spread very rapidly and widely under him and his followers. But his religion was propagated, not by evidence, but by the sword. At the head of a small number of valiant warriors, he gained victories, which enabled him and his successors to collect larger and larger armies, and with these they subdued extensive regions, forcing the conquered people everywhere to acknowledge the Mohammedan faith, on pain of death or bondage. But the Mohammedan religion

never made way (as Christianity did) in any country in which its opponents had the chief power, and were disposed to resist. And Mohammed never pretended to perform any miracles as *signs* of his coming from God. His pretended visions, and ascent to heaven, and visits from angels, which he relates in the book called the Koran, were not even pretended to have been shown openly, as proofs to convince unbelievers, but were to be received by the believers in Mohammed, on his bare word. With the Mohammedans, in short, (as with the Pagans,) the religion did not rest on the miracles, but the miracles rested on the religion. Those who believed the religion, believed the miracles as a *part* of the religion, but not as a *proof* of it. In fact, no such proof was ever even attempted to be offered, of these religions.

The Christian religion was distinguished from these by its resting on evidence; — by its offering a reason, — and requiring Christians to be able to give a reason for believing it.

§ 3. Some persons, however, have a notion that it is presumptuous for a Christian, — at least for an unlearned Christian, — to seek any proof of the truth of his religion. They suppose that this would show a want of faith. They know that *faith* is often and highly commended in Scripture, as the Christian's first duty; and they fancy that this faith consists in a person's readily and firmly believing what is told

him, and trusting in every promise that is made to him; and that the less reason he has for believing and for trusting, and the less he doubts, and inquires, and seeks for grounds for his belief and his confidence, the more faith he shows.

But this is quite a mistake. The faith which the Christian Scriptures speak of and commend, is the very contrary of that blind sort of belief and trust which does not rest on any good reason. This last is more properly called *credulity* than faith. When a man believes without evidence, or against evidence, he is what we rightly call credulous; but he is never commended for this; on the contrary, we often find in Scripture, mention made of persons who are reproached for their unbelief or want of faith, precisely on account of their showing this kind of credulity; that is, not judging fairly according to the evidence, but resolving to believe only what was agreeable to their prejudices, and to trust any one who flattered those prejudices.

§ 4. This was the case with those of the ancient Heathen who refused to forsake the worship of the Sun and Moon and of Jupiter and Diana, and their other gods. Many of the Ephesians (as you read in the Book of Acts) raised a tumult against Paul, in their zeal for their "goddess Diana, and the image which fell down from Jupiter." Now if a man's faith is to be reckoned the greater, the less evidence he has for believing, these men must have had

greater faith than any one who received the Gospel; because they believed in their religion without any evidence at all.

But what our sacred writers mean by faith is quite different from this. When they commend a man's faith, it is because he listens fairly to evidence, and judges according to the reasons laid before him. The difficulty and the virtue of faith, consists in a man's believing and trusting, not against *evidence*, but against his expectations and prejudices; against his inclinations, and passions, and interests. We read, accordingly, that Jesus offered sufficient proof of his coming from God; He said, the works (the miracles) that I do in my Father's name, (by my Father's authority,) they bear witness of me. If you believe not me, believe the works; that is, if you have not the heart to feel the purity and holiness of what I teach, at least you should allow, that "no man can do such miracles, except God be with him."

- ✓- § 5. But we are told, that "for all He had done so many miracles among them, yet did they not believe on Him." They acknowledged that he wrought miracles; as the unbelieving Jews acknowledge at the present day. But they had expected that the Christ [or Messiah] whom they looked for, should come in great worldly power and splendor as a conquering prince who should deliver them from the dominion of the Romans, and should

make Jerusalem the capital of a magnificent empire. They were disappointed and disgusted, ("offended" is the word used in our translations,) at finding Jesus coming from Nazareth, a despised town in Galilee, and having no worldly pomp or pretensions about Him, and having only poor fishermen and peasants as his attendants. Accordingly they rejected Him, saying, "Shall [the] Christ come out of Nazareth?" "As for this man, we know not whence he is." "Out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." And they persuaded themselves, (as their descendants do to this day,) that Jesus was a skilful magician, and performed miracles, not by Divine power, but by the help of some evil spirits or demons, with whom he had allied Himself. Though He went about doing good, healing the sick and afflicted, and teaching the purest morality, they reckoned him a "deceiver," who "cast out demons, through Beelzebub, the prince of the demons."

But if He had come among them offering to fulfil their expectations, and undertaking to deliver their country from the Romans, then, even though He had shown no miraculous power, many of them would have received Him readily. And indeed it is recorded of Him, that he declared this Himself, and foretold to his disciples, "many will come in my name," (that is, taking on them my character,) "saying I am [the] Christ, and will deceive many."

And again, "I am come in my Father's name," (that is, with my Father's authority and power,) "and you receive me not; if another shall come in his own name," (that is, requiring to be believed on his bare word, without any miraculous signs,) "him ye will receive."

§ 6. And so it came to pass; for in the last siege of Jerusalem many impostors came forward, each one claiming to be the Christ, and drawing multitudes to follow him, and leading them to make the most desperate resistance to the Romans; till at length the city was taken and the nation utterly overthrown.

Now the Jews who believed any one of these impostors, were led to do so by their prejudices, and expectations, and wishes, not by any proof that was offered. They showed, therefore, more credulity than the Christians did. And these unbelieving Jews, as they are called, are the very persons who were reproached for their want of faith. You may plainly see from this, that the faith which the Christian writers speak of, is not blind credulity, but fairness in listening to evidence, and judging accordingly, without being led away by prejudices and inclinations.

Moreover we find in the book of Acts that the Jews of Beræa were commended as being "more noble" (that is, more candid) than those of Thessalonica, "because they searched the Scriptures."

(the books of the Old Testament,) to see whether those things were so, "which the Apostles taught." ¶ It is plain, therefore, that Jesus and his Apostles did not mean by Christian faith a blind assent without any reason. And if we would be taught by them, we must be "prepared to answer every one that asketh us a reason of the hope that in us."

LESSON III.

ANCIENT BOOKS.

§ 1. WE have said that Christians, even those who have not received what is called a learned education, ought to have some good reason for being Christians; and not to believe in our religion, as the Pagans do in theirs, merely because their fathers did so before them. But some persons suppose that, however strong the evidences may be for the truth of Christianity, these must be evidences only to the *learned*, who are able to examine ancient books, and to read them in the original languages; and that an ordinary unlearned Christian must take their word for what they tell him.

You do, indeed, read in English the accounts of what Jesus and his Apostles said and did, and of what befell them. But the English book which we

call the Bible professes to be a translation of what was originally written in Greek and Hebrew, which you do not understand. And some one may perhaps ask you, how you can know, except by taking the word of the learned for it, that there *are* these Greek and Hebrew originals which have been handed down from ancient times? or how you can be sure that our translations of them are faithful, except by trusting to the translators? So that an unlearned Christian must, after all, (some people will tell you,) be at the mercy of the learned, in what relates to the very foundations of his faith. He must take their word (it will be said) for the very existence of the Bible in the original languages, and for the meaning of what is written in it; and, therefore, he may as well at once take their word for everything, and believe in his religion on their assurance.

And this is what many persons do. But others will be apt to say, "How can we tell that the learned have not deceived us? The Mohammedans take the word of the learned men among them; and the Pagans do the same; and if the people have been imposed upon by their teachers in Mohammedan and Pagan countries, how can we tell that it is not the same in Christian countries? What ground have we for trusting with such perfect confidence in our Christian teachers, that they are men who would not deceive us?"

§ 2. The truth is, however, that an unlearned

Christian may have very good grounds for being a believer, without placing this entire confidence in any man. He may have reason to believe that there are ancient Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, though he never saw one, nor could read it if he did. And he may be convinced that an English Bible gives the meaning of the original, though he must not trust completely to any one's word. In fact, he may have the same sort of evidence in this case, which every one trusts to in many other cases, where none but a madman would have any doubt at all.

For instance, there is no one tolerably educated, who does not know that there is such a country as France, though he may have never been there himself. Who is there that doubts whether there are such cities as London, and Paris, and Rome, though he may never have visited them? Most people are fully convinced that the world is round, though there are but few who have sailed round it. There are many persons living in the inland parts of these islands who never saw the sea; and yet none of them, even the most ignorant clowns, have any doubt that there is such a thing as the sea. We believe all these and many other such things, because we have been told them.

§ 3. Now suppose any one should say, "How do you know that travellers have not imposed upon you in all these matters; as it is well known travellers

are apt to do? Is there any traveller you can so fully trust in, as to be quite sure he would not deceive you? What would you answer? I suppose you would say, *one* traveller might perhaps deceive us; or even two or three might possibly combine to propagate a false story, in some cases where hardly any one would have the opportunity to detect them; but in these matters there are hundreds and thousands who would be sure to contradict the accounts if they were not true; and travellers are often glad of an opportunity of detecting each other's mistakes. Many of them disagree with each other in several particulars respecting the cities of Paris and Rome; and if it had been false that there are any such cities at all, it is impossible but that the falsehood should have been speedily contradicted. And it is the same with the existence of the sea,—the roundness of the world,—and the other things that were mentioned.

§ 4. It is in the same manner that we believe, on the word of astronomers, that the earth turns round every twenty-four hours, though we are insensible of the motion; and that the sun, which seems as if you could cover it with your hat, is immensely larger than the earth we inhabit; though there is not one person in ten thousand that has ever gone through the mathematical proof of this. And yet we have very good reason for believing it; not from any strong confidence in the honesty of any particular

astronomer, but because the same things are attested by many different astronomers ; who are so far from combining together in a false account, that many of them rejoice in any opportunity of detecting each other's mistakes.

Now an unlearned man has just the same sort of reason for believing that there are ancient copies, in Hebrew and Greek, of the Christian sacred books, and of the works of other ancient authors, who mention some things connected with the origin of Christianity. There is no need for him to place full confidence in any particular man's honesty. For if any book were forged by some learned man in these days, and put forth as a translation from an ancient book, there are many other learned men, of this and of various other countries, and of different religions, who would be eager to make an inquiry, and examine the question, and would be sure to detect any forgery, especially on an important subject.

And it is the same with translators. Many of these are at variance with each other as to the precise sense of some particular passage ; and many of them are very much opposed to each other, as to the doctrines which they believe to be taught in Scripture. But all the different versions of the Bible agree as to the main outline of the history, and of the discourses recorded : and therefore an unlearned Christian may be as sure of the general sense of the original as if he understood the language of it, and

could examine it for himself; because he is sure that unbelievers, who are opposed to all Christians, or different sects of Christians, who are opposed to each other, would not fail to point out any errors in the translations made by their opponents. Scholars have an opportunity to examine and inquire into the meaning of the original works; and therefore *the very bitterness with which they dispute against each other, proves that where they all agree they must be right.*

§ 5. All these ancient books, in short, and all the translations of them, are in the condition of witnesses placed in a witness-box, in a court of justice; examined and cross-examined by friends and enemies, and brought face to face with each other, so as to make it certain that any falsehood or mistake will be brought to light.

No one need doubt, therefore, that the books of our English New Testament are really translated from ancient originals in Greek, and are, at least, not forgeries of the present day; because unbelievers in Christianity would not have failed to expose such a forgery.

But in the case of the books of the Old Testament, we have a remarkable proof that they could never have been forged *by Christians* at all; because they are preserved and highly revered by the unbelieving *Jews* in various parts of the world at this day. These are the Scriptures which the *Jews* at

Beræa were commended for searching with diligent care. In these they found the prophecies to which the Apostles were accustomed to refer, as proving that Jesus was the promised Christ, or Messiah. And the history goes on to relate, that the consequence of their searching those Scriptures, was, that "many of them believed."

LESSON IV.

PROPHECIES.

§ 1. BUT these Old Testament Scriptures are, in some respects, more instructive to *us*, even than to the persons who lived in the Apostles' time ; on account of the more complete fulfilment of some of the prophecies that have since taken place.

In the times of the Apostles, the religion of Jesus Christ was, indeed, spreading very rapidly, both among Jews and Gentiles ; but still it was but a small and obscure portion of either that had embraced it, compared with those who either knew nothing of it, or rejected it with scorn and hatred. *Now*, Jesus is, and has been for many ages, acknowledged as Lord, in all the most civilized portions of the world. His disciples overthrew the *religions* of all the most powerful and enlightened

nations, and produced, without conquest, and without the help of wealth, or of human power, or learning, the most wonderful change that ever was produced in men's opinions, and on the most important point. The number of those who profess Christianity is computed at about two hundred and fifty millions; comprehending all the most civilized nations of the world. And to estimate properly the greatness of the effect produced, we should take into account that there are about one hundred and twenty millions of persons whose religion is so far founded on Christ's, that it could never have existed, such as it is, if Christ had never appeared,—I mean the Mohammedans; for though these have departed widely from the religion which Jesus taught, and regard Mohammed as a greater prophet than He, yet they acknowledge Jesus as a true prophet, and as the Messiah, or Christ; and profess that their religion is founded on his.

§ 2. This should be taken into account; because what we are now speaking of is the great and wonderful *effect* produced,—the extraordinary *change* brought about in the world,—by Christ and his Apostles. So great is this effect, that every man, whether believer or unbeliever, if not totally ignorant of history, must allow that Jesus Christ was by far **THE MOST IMPORTANT AND EXTRAORDINARY PERSON** that ever appeared on earth; and that he effected the most wonderful revolution that ever was

effected in the religion of mankind. Yet this wonderful change was made by a person of the Jewish nation, — a nation which was never one of the greatest and most powerful, — never at all equal in the fame of wisdom, and knowledge, and skill in the arts of life, to the Greeks, and several other of the ancient nations. And all this was done by a person who was despised, and persecuted, and put to a shameful death, by the Jews themselves, his own countrymen. If, therefore, you were to ask any unbeliever in Christianity, “Who was the most wonderful person that ever existed? and ~~who~~ brought about the most extraordinary effect, in the strangest and most wonderful manner?” he could hardly help answering that Jesus of Nazareth was the person.

And then you might ask him to explain how it happened, (supposing our religion to be an invention of man,) that all this had been foretold in the ancient prophecies of the Old Testament; in books which are carefully preserved, and held in high reverence, by the unbelieving Jews at this day.

§ 3. You may find such prophecies as I am speaking of, in various parts of the Old Testament. As, for instance, it was prophesied that a great blessing to all nations of the earth should spring from the nation that was to descend from Abraham. (Gen. xxii. 18.)

Now, when the descendants of Abraham did

actually become a nation, and did receive, through Moses, a religion which they held in the highest veneration, they would naturally expect the above prophecy to refer to the extension of that very religion. And any one of them professing to be a prophet, but speaking really as a mere man, would have been sure to confirm that expectation. Yet it was foretold, that the religion which the Israelites had received from Moses, was to give place to a *new* one: as in Jer. xxxi. 31: "Behold the days come [are coming], saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers," &c.

See also for prophecies of the Messiah: Micah iv. 1, 2, 3; v. 2, 3, 4; Isaiah ix. 6; xi. 1; Ezekiel xxxiv. 23; Jer. xxiii. 5; Zech. vi. 12; ix. 9, &c.; Mal. iii. 1.

Now many of these prophecies were delivered (as the unbelieving Jews of this day bear witness) six hundred years before the birth of Jesus: at which time, and also at the time when the Gospel was first preached, the Jews were so far from being a great and powerful people, that they had been conquered and brought into subjection by other nations. So that, according to all human conjecture, nothing could have been more strange, than the delivery of these prophecies and their fulfilment.

§ 4. This fulfilment, by the wide spread of

Christ's religion among various nations, though it was *expected* by the early Christians, had not been *seen* by them, as it is by *us*. They saw, however, that what Jesus had done and suffered did agree with the prophecies of the Old Testament ; that He was born at the time when it had been foretold that Christ was to come, and when the whole Jewish nation were in expectation of his coming, — that He was acknowledged by his enemies to have wrought those miracles which had been prophesied of: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped: then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing," (Isaiah xxxv. 5; Luke vii. 22;) that, notwithstanding this, He had been rejected and put to death, as had been foretold; and that his disciples bore witness to his having risen from the dead, agreeably to other prophecies: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (*i. e.*, the grave); neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption," (Psalm xvi. 10; Acts ii. 27.)

All this led them to conclude, when they examined candidly, that the miracles which they saw, were not the work of evil spirits, but that the Gospel did come from God. On the other hand, we, who have not actually seen the miracles which *they* saw, have an advantage over them in seeing such an extraordinary fulfilment of prophecy, in what has happened since their time.

LESSON V.

MIRACLES. PART I.

§ 1. THE people who lived in the times of the Apostles, though they had not seen so much as we have of the fulfilment of the ancient prophecies, yet had seen them so far fulfilled in Jesus, as to afford good reasons for receiving Him.

But you may, perhaps, be inclined to wonder how they should need to search the Old Testament Scriptures for a confirmation of what the Apostles taught, if those Apostles really performed such miracles as we read of. It may seem strange to you, that men who healed the sick with a touch, and displayed so many other signs, far beyond human power, should not have been at once believed, when they called themselves God's messengers.

§ 2. I have said that the works performed by Jesus and his disciples were beyond the unassisted powers of man. And this, I think, is the best description of what is meant by a miracle. *Super-human* would perhaps be a better word to apply to a miracle than *supernatural*; for if we believe that "nature" is merely another word to signify that state of things, and course of events, which God has appointed, nothing that occurs can be strictly called "supernatural." Jesus. himself accordingly de-

scribes his works, not as violations of the laws of nature, but as "works which *none other man* did." But what is in general meant by "supernatural," is, something out of the *ordinary* course of nature; something at variance with those laws of nature which *we* have been *accustomed to*.

But then it might be objected that we cannot decide what does violate the ordinary laws of nature, unless we can be sure that we are *acquainted* with all those laws. For instance, an inhabitant of the tropical climates might think it contrary to the laws of nature that water should ever become hard; since he had never seen ice. And when electricity was first discovered, many of its effects were contrary to the laws of nature which had been hitherto known. But any one who visits colder regions may see with his own eyes that water does become solid. And any one who will procure an electrical machine, or who attends lectures on the subject, may see for himself the effects of electricity.

Now suppose Jesus had been a person who had discovered some new natural agent, through which any man might be enabled to cure diseases by a touch, and perform the other wonderful works which He did, and through which any one else might have done the like, this would soon have become known and practised by all; just like the use of electricity, or of any newly-discovered medicine; and from his time down to this day every one

would have commonly performed just the same works that He did. He might indeed have kept it to himself as a secret, and thus have induced some to believe that He wrought miracles. But so far from acting thus, He imparted his power first to the twelve Apostles, and afterwards to seventy others : and after his departure, his Apostles received the power of not only performing mighty works themselves, but also of bestowing these gifts on all the disciples on whom they laid their hands ; as you may see from Acts viii. 14–23 ; Acts xix. 6 ; Rom. i. 11 ; 1 Cor. xii. 7–11, &c. There must have been, therefore, in the early Church many hundreds, and probably many thousands, performing the same sort of works as Jesus and his Apostles. And if, therefore, these had been performed by means of any natural agent, such as any one else might use as well as they, the art would soon have been universally known ; and the works performed by the disciples of Jesus would have been commonly performed by all men ever after, down to this day.

But the Jews were convinced, with good reason, that the works of Jesus were beyond the powers of unassisted man. And it may seem strange to us, that they did not all come at once to the same conclusion with Nicodemus, when he said, “No man can do these miracles which thou doest, except God be with him.”

But you must remember how much the people of

those days were accustomed to believe in magic. Indeed, in much later times, long after Christianity prevailed, it was a very common notion that there were magicians who were able, through the help of evil demons, to work various miracles. And in the days of the Apostles this belief in the power of magic was very general, both among the Jews and the Heathen. Those Jews among whom Jesus lived, and who rejected Him, maintained that He was a magician who did mighty works through the prince of demons. This is not only related by the Christian writers in the New Testament, but is a *common tradition among the unbelieving Jews at this very day*; who have among them an ancient book, giving this account of the origin of Christianity. And there can be no doubt that this must have been (as our sacred writers tell us it was) what the adversaries of Jesus maintained from the first. For if those who lived on the spot in his time, had denied or doubted the facts of the miracles, and had declared that the accounts of them were false tales, and that no miracles had ever really been wrought, we may be sure that the same would have been said ever after by their descendants. They would never have thought of rejecting the accounts given by their own ancestors, and preferring that of the Christian writers. If, therefore, any of the Jews among whom Jesus lived, had denied the fact of his miraculous powers, it is inconceivable that another gen-

eration of Jews should have betaken themselves to the pretence of magic, to account for miracles which had never been acknowledged at the time, but had been reckoned impostures by the very people among whom they were said to have been performed.

The Pagan adversaries of Christianity also seem to have had the same persuasion on this subject as the Jews, and to have attributed the Christian miracles to magical art. We learn this from all the remains that have come down to us, of the ancient writings against Christianity, and of the answers to them written by Christians.

§ 3. Now suppose that in the present day any one should appear, professing to be sent from God, and to work miracles as a sign of his being so sent ; you would naturally think that the only question would be as to the reality of the miracles ; and that all men would at once believe him, as soon as ever they were satisfied that he had performed something clearly beyond human power. But men certainly did not judge so in ancient times. It was not then, only one question, but two, that had to be settled : first, whether any sign had really been displayed which showed a power beyond that of man ; and secondly, whether this supernatural power came from God, or from an evil demon.

Now, after the former of these questions was decided, that is, after the fact of the miracles was admitted, the Jews were inclined still to doubt &c

disbelieve the religion which Jesus taught, because it was so different from what they had been used to expect ; and hence it was that the greater part of them attributed his miracles to magic. But others were of a more candid mind, ("more noble," as it is in our translation,) such as the people of Beræa. These, by carefully searching the Scriptures, satisfied themselves that the ancient prophecies respecting the Christ, did really agree with all that Jesus had done and suffered. And this it was that convinced them that his miracles were wrought not by evil spirits, but by the Divine power ; and thus they were brought to the conclusion that the "kingdom of heaven was at hand."

§ 4. If, then, any one should say to you, "How great an advantage the people who lived in those days, and saw miracles performed before their eyes, must have had over us, who only read of them in ancient books ; and how can men in these days be expected to believe as firmly as *they* did ?" — you may answer, that different men's trials and advantages are pretty nearly balanced. The people who lived in those times were not (any more than ourselves) forced into belief whether they would or no ; but were left to exercise candor in judgment fairly from the evidence before them. Those, then, who were resolved to yield to their prejudice against Jesus, and to reject Him, found a ready excuse (an excuse which would not be liste

now), by attributing his miracles to the magical arts which in those days were commonly believed in. And again, though they saw many miracles which we only read of, they did not see that great miracle (as it may be called) which is before our eyes, in the fulfilment of prophecy since their time. They could see indeed many prophecies fulfilled in Jesus; but we have an advantage over them in witnessing the more complete fulfilment of the prophecies respecting the wonderful spread of his religion.

LESSON VI.

MIRACLES. PART II.

§ 1. "BUT can we of these days really find sufficient proof," (some one may say,) "and such proof as is within the reach of ordinary Christians, for believing that miracles really were performed, which we never saw, but which are recorded in books, as having happened nearly 1800 years ago?" Is it not expecting a great deal of us, to require us to believe that there were persons who used to cure blindness and other diseases by a touch, or a word, and raise the dead, and still the raging of the sea, and feed a multitude with a few loaves?

Certainly these things are in themselves hard to

be believed; and if we were to find in some ancient book accounts of some great wonders which led to no *effects that exist at this day*, and had nothing to do with the present state of things among us, we might well be excused for doubting or disbelieving such accounts; or, at least none but learned men who had the ability and the opportunity to make full inquiry into the evidence of such a book, could fairly be expected to trouble themselves about the question. But the case of the Christian miracles is not one of this kind. They are closely connected with something which we do see before us at this day; namely, with the existence of the Christian religion in so great a part of the world. A man cannot, indeed, be fairly required to believe any thing very strange and unlikely, except when there is something still *more* strange and unlikely on the opposite side. Now that is just the case with respect to the Christian miracles; for, wonderful as the whole Gospel History is, the most wonderful thing of all is, that a Jewish peasant should have succeeded in changing the religion of the world. That *He should have succeeded in doing this without displaying any miracles, would have been more wonderful than all the miracles that are recorded*; and that He should have accomplished all this by means of *pretended* miracles when none were really performed, would be the most incredible of all. So that those who are unwilling to believe anything that is

strange, cannot escape doing so by disbelieving the Gospel ; but will have to believe something still more strange, if they reject the Gospel.

§ 2. And it is the same in many other cases as well as in what relates to religion. We are often obliged to believe, at any rate, in something that is very wonderful, in order to avoid believing something else that is still more wonderful. For instance, it is well known that in these islands, and in several other parts of the world, there are great beds of sea-shells found near the top of hills, sometimes several thousand feet above the sea. Now it is certainly very hard to believe that the sea should ever have covered those places which now lie so far above it. And yet we are compelled to believe this ; because we cannot think of any other way that is not far more incredible, by which those shells have been deposited there.

And so it is with the Gospel History. We are sure that the Christian religion does now exist, and has overspread most of the civilized world ; and we know that it was not first introduced and propagated (like that of Mohammed) by force of arms. To believe that it was received and made its way, without miracles, would be to believe something more miraculous (if one may so speak) than all the miracles that our books record.

§ 3. But some people may say that the ancient Jews and Pagans, who so readily believed in magical

arts, and the power of demons, must have been very weak and credulous men; and that therefore they may have given credit to tales of miracles without making any careful inquiry. Now there is, indeed, no doubt that they were weak and credulous; but this weakness and credulity would never have led them to believe what was against their early prejudices, and expectations and wishes; quite the contrary. *The more weak and credulous any man is, the harder it is to convince him of anything that is opposite to his habits of thought and inclinations.* He will readily receive without proof anything that falls in with his prejudices; and will be disposed to hold out against any evidence that goes against them.

Now all the prejudices of the Jews and Pagans were against the religion that Jesus and his Apostles taught; and, accordingly, we might have expected that the most credulous of them should have done just what our histories tell us they did; that is, resolved to reject the religion at any rate, and readily satisfy themselves with some weak and absurd way of accounting for the miracles. But, credulous as they were about magic, the enemies of Jesus would never have resorted to that pretence, if they could have denied the facts. They would certainly have been more ready to maintain, if possible, that no miracles had taken place, than to explain them as performed by magic; because this pretence only went to make out that Jesus, notwithstanding his

miracles, *might possibly* not come from God ; whereas, if they could have shown that He or his Apostles had attempted to deceive people by pretended miracles, this would at once have held them up to scorn as impostors.

§ 4. We read in the Gospel of John (chap. ix.), that the Jewish rulers narrowly examined into the reality of a miracle performed by Jesus, on a man that was born blind. This is exactly what we may be sure must have been done in the case of other miracles also ; and if the enemies of Jesus could have succeeded in detecting and exposing any falsehood or trick, they would have been eager to do so ; because they would have been thus sure to overthrow his pretensions at once.

It is plain, therefore, that the weakness and credulity of the people of those days would be very far from disposing them readily to give credit to miracles, in favor of a religion that was opposed to their prejudices ; and that, on the contrary, such persons would be likely, some of them obstinately, to reject the religion, and others, only gradually and slowly to receive it, after having carefully searched the ancient prophecies, and found that these went to confirm it. Now this is just the account that our histories give.

It appears certain, then, that the unbelieving Jews and Pagans of those days did find it impossible to throw any doubt on the fact of the miracles having

really been performed ; because *that* would have enabled them easily to expose Jesus to contempt as an impostor. *Their acknowledging the miracles, and attributing them to magic, as the unbelieving Jews do to this day, shows that the evidence for them, after the strictest scrutiny by the most bitter enemies, was perfectly undeniable, at the time and place when they were said to be performed.*

LESSON VIII.

MIRACLES. PART III.

§ 1. THERE are persons, some of whom you may, perhaps, meet with, who, though they are believers in Christianity, yet will not allow that the miracles recorded in Scripture are any ground for their belief. They are convinced (they will tell you) that Jesus Christ came from God, because “never man spake like this man.” They find the religion so pure and admirable in itself, and they feel it so well suited to their wants, and to the wants of all mankind, and so full of heavenly wisdom and goodness, that they need no other proof of its being from heaven ; but as for miracles, these (they will tell you) are among the difficulties to be got over : they believe them as a *part* of the religion, from finding

them recorded in the Bible ; but they would have believed the Gospel as easily, or more easily, without them. The miracles (they will say) were indeed a proof to those who lived at the time, and *saw* them ; but to us of the present day, who only *read* of them, they are a part of our faith, and not a part of the *evidence* of our faith. For it is a greater trial of faith, they say, to believe in such wonderful works as Jesus is said to have performed, than to believe that such wise and excellent doctrine as He delivered was truly from heaven.

Now there is indeed much truth in a part of what these persons say ; but they do not take a clear view of the whole subject of evidence. It is indeed true, that there is, as they observe, great weight in the internal evidence (as it is called) of Christianity ; that is, the reasons for believing it from the character of the religion itself. The more you study it, the more strongly you will perceive that it is such a religion as no *man* would have been likely to invent ; and of all men, a Jew most unlikely. But there are many different kinds of evidence for the same truth ; and one kind of evidence may the most impress one man's mind, and another another's. And, among the rest, the Christian miracles certainly are a very decisive proof of the truth of Christ's religion to any one who is convinced (as you have seen there is reason to be) that they really were wrought. Of course, there is more difficulty for us in making out

this point, than there was for men who lived at the same times and places with Jesus and his Apostles; but when this point *has* been made out and we do believe the miracles, they are no less a proof of the religion to us than to those early Christians.

§ 2. It is quite a mistake to suppose that the difficulty of proving any fact makes that fact, when it is proved, a less convincing proof of something else. For example, — to take an instance formerly given, — those who live in the neighborhood of the places where great beds of sea-shells are found near the tops of hills, and have seen them there themselves, are convinced by this that at some time or other those beds must have been under the sea. Now a person who lives at a distance from such places, has more difficulty than those on the spot, in making out whether there *are* any such beds of shells. He has to inquire of travellers, or of those who have conversed with them; and to consult books, and perhaps examine pieces of the rock containing some of the shells; but when once he is fully satisfied that there are such beds of sea-shells, this is just as good a proof to him as to the others, that the sea must have formerly covered them.

And so also, in respect of the Christian miracles. The difficulty we may have in deciding whether they were really wrought, does not make them (when we *are* convinced that they were wrought) a less decisive proof that the Christian religion is from God.

But, as for the difficulty of believing in anything so strange and wonderful as those miracles, you should remember, that every difficulty (as was observed before) should be weighed against that on the opposite side. Now, the difficulty of believing the miracles recorded in our sacred books, is much less than the opposite difficulty of believing that the Christian religion was established without miracles. That a Jewish peasant should have overthrown the religion of the civilized world, without the aid of any miracles, is far more miraculous, — at least, more incredible, — than anything that our books relate; and it will appear still more incredible, if you remember that this wonderful change was brought about *by means of an appeal* to miracles. Jesus and his Apostles did certainly *profess* to display miraculous powers in proof of their being sent from God; and this would have been the greatest hinderance to their propagating a new religion, if they had really possessed no such powers; because this pretence would have laid them open to detection and ridicule.

§ 3. But there is a distinction between our religion and all others, which is often overlooked. Almost all religions have some miraculous pretensions connected with them; that is, miracles are recorded to have been wrought in support of some Pagan religion, among people who *already* believed it. But you will not find that any religion except

ours was ever *introduced*, — and introduced among enemies, — by miraculous pretensions. Ours is the only faith that ever was **FOUNDED** on an appeal to the evidence of miracles. And we have every reason to believe, that no such attempt ever did or could succeed, if the miracles were not really performed. The difficulty, therefore, of believing that the Christian religion was propagated by means of miracles, is nothing in comparison of the difficulty of believing that it could have been propagated without any.

Indeed, we have every reason to believe, that many *more* miracles must have been performed than are particularly related. Several particular cases, indeed, of our Lord's miracles were described ; but, besides these, we are told, in various places, of great multitudes of sick people being brought to him, and that "He healed them all." (Matt. xii. 15 ; xix. 2.) So also, besides particular miracles related as done by the Apostles, (Acts ii. 33 ; iii. 7 ; ix. 33 ; xiii. 11 ; xiv. 8 ; xxviii. 5 ;) we are told, generally, of their not only performing many miracles, (Acts viii. 6 ; xix. 11,) but also bestowing miraculous powers on great numbers of disciples. (Acts vi. 5, 8 ; x. 44 ; xix. 6.) And we find St. Paul, in one of his Epistles, speaking of it as a thing familiarly known, that miracles were "the sign of an Apostle." (2 Cor. xii. 12.) And, in all these books, we find miracles not boastfully dwelt on, or described as something unusual ; but *alluded* to, as familiarly

known, to the persons to whom the books were familiarly addressed; that is, to the Christians of those days.

§ 4. But besides the accounts given in the Christian Scriptures, we might be sure, from the very nature of the case, that the Apostles could never have even *gained a hearing*, at least, among the Gentiles, if they had not displayed some extraordinary and supernatural power. Fancy a few poor Jewish fishermen, tent-makers, and peasants, going into one of the great Roman or Grecian cities, whose inhabitants were proud of the splendid temples, and beautiful images of their gods, which had been worshipped time out of mind by their ancestors; they were proud, too, of their schools of philosophy, where those reputed the wisest men among them discoursed on the most curious and sublime subjects, to the youth of the noblest families; and then fancy these Jewish strangers telling them to cast away their images as an abominable folly, — to renounce the religion of their ancestors, — to reject with scorn the instructions of their philosophers, — and to receive instead, as a messenger from heaven, a Jew, of humble station, who had been put to the most shameful death. How do you think men would have been received, who should have made such an attempt as this, with merely such weak human means as preaching? You cannot doubt that all men would have scorned them, and ridiculed or pitied them as madmen.

§ 5. As for the wisdom, and purity, and sublimity of the religion of the Gospel, this might have gained them some attention, — not, indeed, among the mass of the people, who were too gross to relish or perceive this purity and wisdom, — but among a very few of the better sort, if once they could be brought to listen to the description of the religion. And this, perhaps, they might have done, if it had been taught by some Greek or Roman philosophers, famous for knowledge and wisdom. But the Gospel was preached by men of a nation, which the Greeks and Romans looked down upon as barbarian ; and whose religion, especially, they scorned and detested for being so different from their own. And not only did the Apostles belong to this despised nation, but they were the outcasts of that very nation ; being rejected and abhorred by the chief part of their Jewish brethren.

If, therefore, they had come among the Gentiles, teaching the most sublime religious doctrine, and trusting merely to the excellence of what they taught, it is impossible they should have even had a hearing. It is not enough to say, that no one would have *believed* them ; but no one would even have *listened* to them, if they had not first roused men's serious attention, by working (as we are told they did,) "remarkable [special] miracles." (Acts xix. 11.)

§ 6. Afterwards, indeed, when the Gospel had

spread, so as to excite general attention, many men would be likely to listen to the preaching of it even by persons, who did not pretend to miraculous power, but who merely bore witness to the miracles they had seen ; giving proof, at the same time, that they were not false witnesses, by their firmness in facing persecution. And this was, certainly, a good ground for believing their testimony. For, though men may be mistaken as to the *opinions* which they sincerely hold, they could not be mistaken as to such *facts* as the Christian miracles, of which they professed themselves eye-witnesses ; as the Apostles, for instance, were, of their Master's resurrection. And it is not to be conceived, that men would expose themselves to dangers, and tortures, and death, in attesting false stories, which they must have known to be false. If there had been any well-contrived imposture, in respect of pretended miracles, it is impossible but that some persons, at least, out of the many hundreds brought forward, as eye-witnesses, would have been induced by threats, tortures, or bribes, to betray the imposture.

There were many, therefore, who received the Gospel, — and with good reason, — on such testimony as this, as soon as they could be brought to listen to and examine it. But, in the first instance, the Apostles could not have brought any of the Gentiles, at least, to listen to them, if they had not begun by working evident miracles themselves. A handful

of Jewish strangers, of humble rank, would never have obtained a hearing among the most powerful, and most civilized, and proudest nations of the world, if they had not, at first, roused their attention by the display of some extraordinary powers.

LESSON VIII.

WONDERS AND SIGNS.

§ 1. IT is plain, for the reasons which have been put before you, that the Apostles must have roused men's attention, and gained themselves a hearing, by performing,—as our books tell us they did,—many wonderful works. And these works, as well as those of Jesus, which they related, must have been such as to admit of no mistake, either about the facts, or about their being really superhuman. Else, surrounded as they were by enemies, and with men's prejudices opposed to them, it seems impossible they could have been believed, or even attended to. If, for instance, there were a report of some sick men having been miraculously cured by them, but such a report as to leave a doubt either as to the *fact* of the cure having taken place, or as to the *manner* of the cure,—that is, whether the man might not have recovered by natural means,—any such doubt would have been enough to have shut *men's ears* against them.

And besides this, it was necessary that the miracles should be both so numerous, and so various in kind, as to exceed the powers generally supposed to belong to magicians. For, most persons seem to have thought that a magician might, through the aid of demons, be enabled to perform *some* miracles, and not others of a different kind. We find it related, accordingly, that Jesus not only healed the lame, and blind, and sick, some present and some absent, grown persons and children, but also raised the dead, fed a multitude with a few loaves, stilled the waves and winds at his bidding, blasted a tree at his word, changed water into wine, &c. And this seems to have been no more than a necessary condescension to the weakness of men's minds in those days. They did not, at once, conclude that He must be a true prophet from his working *one* miracle; but said, "When [the] Christ cometh, will he do *more* miracles than these which this man doeth?" (John vii. 31.) So, also, Nicodemus says,—not "No man can do *any* miracles," but,— "No man can do *these* miracles which thou doest, except God be with him." (John iii. 2.) And the disciples, who had witnessed so many miraculous cures, were astonished, we are told, at finding that Jesus had a command over the storm: "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" (Matt. viii. 27.)

And we find the same variety, also, in the miracu-

lous gifts possessed by the Apostles, and bestowed by them on other Christians : (as you may see in 1 Cor. xii. and elsewhere.)

§ 2. You should observe, too, that it would not have satisfied men's minds merely to see some extraordinary occurrence, unless it were also something plainly *done* by the Apostles, as a *sign*, testifying that they were divine messengers. It would have been impossible for them, in the midst of adversaries, to take advantage of some remarkable event, calling it a miracle, and to explain it so as to favor their own pretensions.

This has often been done, indeed, in support of some religion, or some doctrine, which men already believe, or are inclined to believe. The Pagans were, many of them, ready enough to attribute any thing wonderful to a miraculous interference of Jupiter or some of their other gods. And so, also Mohammed easily persuaded his followers that some of his victories were miraculous, and that God sent angels to fight for him. He was a great warrior and his followers being full of enthusiasm, and eager for conquest, glory, and plunder, often defeated very superior force of their enemies, and gained victories, which may be rightly called wonderful though not more wonderful than several which have been gained by others. It is not strange, therefore that Mohammed should easily have persuaded them that their victories were miraculous, and were *proof that God was on their side*.

§ 3. In all times, indeed, men are to be found who call any extraordinary event miraculous, and interpret it so as to favor their own views and prejudices. If a man's life is preserved from shipwreck, or any other danger, in a remarkable manner, many people speak of it as a miraculous escape. Or if a man loses his life in a remarkable manner, or a plot is discovered by some curious train of circumstances, or, in short, if any extraordinary event takes place, there are persons who at once call it a miraculous interference, and a *sign* of the divine favor or displeasure towards some of the parties concerned.

§ 4. But it is very rash to pronounce in this manner as to any remarkable event that occurs. A mere *wonderful occurrence*, of itself, *proves* nothing; but when a man *does* something that is beyond human power to do, or *foretells* something beyond human foresight, and makes this a testimony of his coming from God, it is then, and then only, that he is properly said to offer a miraculous proof. And accordingly the works performed by Jesus and his Apostles are called in Scripture, not merely (as they really were) *Miracles*, (that is, *wonders*,) but *Signs*; that is, miraculous *evidence*. (Mark xvi. 20.)

For instance, that a violent storm should suddenly cease, and be succeeded by a complete calm, is something extraordinary; but of itself proves nothing. But when the disciples heard Jesus give his command, and rebuke the wind and waves, which

immediately became still, they justly regarded this as a *sign* that God was with him. (Matt. viii. 26.) So also, that a person seemingly dead should suddenly revive and rise up, is indeed a wonderful event; but, of itself, is merely a wonder. But when Jesus told the child of Jairus, (Luke viii. 54,) and the widow's son of Nain, (Luke vii. 14,) to rise up, and each of them did so at his word, these became proofs of his divine mission. These were among the "works, which," as he said, "bore *witness* of Him." Again, if any one who is opposing some particular religious sect or system, should suddenly lose his eyesight, it would be very presumptuous to pronounce at once that he was struck blind as a divine judgment. But when St. Paul rebuked Elymas, and declared that the hand of the Lord was upon him, and that he should become blind, and immediately a darkness did fall upon him, (Acts xiii. 10, 11,) the Roman governor justly regarded this as a *sign*; and believed accordingly in what Paul was teaching.

§ 5. Anything wonderful, in short, is then (and then only) a miraculous Sign, when some one *performs* or *foretells* it, in a manner surpassing human power, so as to make it *attest* the truth of what he says. And this may fairly be required of any one professing to be a messenger from Heaven. For if a stranger were to come to you professing to bring a message from some friend of yours, you would naturally expect him to show you that friend's hand-

writing, or some other such *token*, to prove that he really was so sent. And so, also, when a man comes to this country as an ambassador from some other country, he is required first to produce his "*credentials*," as they are called; that is, papers which prove that he is no impostor, but is really commissioned as an ambassador. And it is equally right that men professing to bring a message immediately from God, should be required to show what may be called their "*credentials*;" that is, such miraculous powers as God alone could have bestowed, as a sign or token, to prove the reality of their divine commission.

§ 6. But credulous and superstitious people often overlook this rule; and are ready to interpret as a miraculous sign any remarkable occurrence, — such as a victory, or a famine, or a thunder-storm, or a sudden recovery from sickness, or the like, — when these are so explained as to favor, or at least not oppose, their prejudices, and the religious belief they are already inclined to. The Apostles, however, found no such prejudices in their favor. They would never have been allowed to explain in their own way anything strange that might happen. On the contrary, all the superstitious credulity of the people was *opposed* to them. And instead of men's being ready to cry "*Miracle!*" when anything extraordinary occurred, and to interpret it in favor of Christianity, the Apostles found the most credu-

lous men disposed rather to attribute the Christian miracles to magic.

In order to gain converts, therefore, or even to obtain a hearing, they must have shown (as our books tell us they did) many mighty works, evidently performed by them, as "the Signs of an Apostle."

LESSON IX.

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCES.

§ 1. How comes it that some persons pretend that an ordinary Christian cannot be taught to understand the evidence for their religion, but must be content to take it for granted, as the Pagans do theirs, because they have been brought up to it? It is, because when they speak of "the evidences of Christianity," they mean *all* the evidences. And certainly, to be well acquainted with all of these, would be enough to occupy the whole life of a studious man, even though he should devote himself entirely to that study. Indeed, to go through all the books that have been written on the subject, and to examine and thoroughly master all the arguments on both sides, that have ever been brought forward, would be more than any one man could accomplish, even if he had nothing else to do. But there are

things which you may have very good reasons for believing, though you may not know a tenth part of the proofs of them, that have been, or might be, produced. For instance, you may have good grounds for believing that there is such a city as Rome, and that it was formerly the capital of a mighty empire, of which Britain was one of the provinces. But *all* the evidence that might be brought forward in proof of this would be enough to occupy a learned man for many years, if he were to examine it thoroughly. It is sufficient in any case, if we have *enough* evidence to warrant our belief; even though there should be much more evidence of the same thing besides, which we have not examined. Although, therefore, the generality of Christians cannot be expected to know the whole, or nearly the whole, of the proofs of their religion, that is no reason against their seeking, and obtaining, proofs enough to convince a reasonable mind.

Even that small portion of the evidences you have now been learning, is perhaps more than sufficient for this purpose; though it is but a part, even of what any man is able to understand.

§ 2. It is certain that Christianity now exists; and that Jesus Christ is acknowledged as Lord and Master, (in words, at least,) among all the most civilized people of the world. It is certain, too, that this cannot have been always the case; but that Christianity must have been introduced, by some

means or other, among the Jews and Pagans; who must have had some reasons that appeared to them very strong, to induce them to change the religions they had been brought up in.

You know, also, that this great revolution in the religion of the world was begun by a person of humble rank, in one of the least powerful and least esteemed of the ancient nations. It was not a mighty warrior, or a rich and powerful prince, or a learned philosopher, but a Jewish peasant, that brought about this wonderful change. And you are sure, accordingly, that no one, whether friend or enemy, can reasonably doubt that Jesus of Nazareth is at any rate the most extraordinary and most important personage that ever appeared in the world.

§ 3. Again, you have seen that there is good reason to be certain that Jesus and his Apostles propagated their religion by an appeal to miracles; that is, that they professed to perform works beyond human power, as a sign of their being messengers from God. And no one has ever been able to point out any other way in which they did, or could, introduce the religion. Nor can we conceive how a few Jewish peasants, without power, or wealth, or learning, or popular prejudice on their side, could have been, at first, either believed or listened to, if they had not begun by appealing to the testimony of miraculous signs. Now this would have been no help, but a hinderance to their preaching, if their

pretensions to superhuman powers had not been true ; because, surrounded as they were by adversaries, and men prejudiced against them, any attempt at imposture would have been detected, and would have exposed them to general scorn. And, accordingly, it does not appear that any of the Pagan religions — in short, any religion except ours — ever was first introduced and established among adversaries by an appeal to the evidence of miracles.

We have good grounds for believing, therefore, that the people of those times, even the enemies of Christianity, found it impossible to deny the fact of the miracles being wrought (see Acts iv. 16 ;) and thence were driven to account for them as the work of evil spirits. And this we find recorded, not only in the writings of Christian authors, but also in those of Jewish and Pagan adversaries.

§ 4. We find accounts, too, in the works of Pagan writers, as well as in the New Testament, of the severe persecutions which great numbers of the early Christians had to encounter. And this furnishes a proof of their sincerely believing not only the truth of their religion, but also the miracles which many of them professed to have seen, and in which they could not have been mistaken. For, if these miracles had been impostures, it is incredible that such numbers of men should have exposed themselves to dangers and hardships to attest the truth of them, without any one being induced by suffering, (and

this, though some of them *were* driven to renounce Christianity,) to betray the imposture.

§ 5. That the works of these writers have really come down to us, and that the general sense of them is given in our translations, you have good reason to be convinced, even without understanding the original languages, or examining ancient manuscripts. You need not take the word of a scholar for this, or feel such full confidence in the honesty of any two or three learned men, as to trust that they would not deceive you in anything, and to believe on their authority. There is, and has been, so great a number of learned men, in various countries and ages, some opposed to Christianity, and others, Christians of different sects opposed to each other, that they never could have agreed in forging a book, or putting forth a false translation. On the contrary, any supposed mistake or fraud of any one of them, the rest are ready to expose. So that there is no reasonable doubt as to anything in which they all agree.

And this, you have seen, is the same sort of evidence on which most men believe that the earth is round, — that there is such a city as Rome, — and many other things which they have not themselves seen, but which rest on the *uncontradicted* testimony of many independent witnesses.

§ 6. You have seen also, that in respect of the books of the Old Testament there is this very

remarkable circumstance, that they are preserved with the utmost care and reverence by the Jews, who reject Jesus Christ, although these books contain what appear to Christians most remarkable prophecies of Him.

And it was pointed out to you, that there are many parts of these prophecies of which we see the fulfilment before us, though the early Christians did not; namely, that a religion should arise among the Jews, which would have a wide spread among the Gentiles, but yet that it should be a *new* religion, not the same as taught by Moses; and that this religion should spring, not from the whole nation, but from one individual of that nation, and He a person despised, rejected, and persecuted even to death, by his own people.

All this, which is so unlike what any one would have foretold from mere guess, but which we see has actually come to pass, is prophesied in books which enemies of Christianity (the unbelieving Jews of this day) reverence as divinely inspired.

Now if you reflect attentively on all these heads of evidence which you have been learning, and of which this short summary has just been put before you, you will perceive that even a portion of it might be fairly considered as a strong reason to be given of the hope that is in you; but that when you take *the whole of it together*, it is sufficient to satisfy any reasonable mind. For, to believe that so many

marks of truth should be brought together by chance, or by *man's* contrivance, in favor of a false story, — to believe this, I say, would be much greater credulity than to believe that the Gospel really was from God.

§ 7. These marks of truth, you should observe, are (as has been said) a vast deal stronger when *taken together*, and confirming each other. For, each of the separate proofs may be regarded as a distinct *witness*. And when several independent witnesses give the same evidence, their agreement may prove the matter completely, even when no one of those witnesses is, by himself, deserving of confidence. Suppose, for instance, that one out of several men, — none of them much to be relied on, — gives a particular account of some transaction which he professes to have seen : you may think it not unlikely that he may have invented the story, or have dreamed it : but then, if his account is confirmed by another, and another, of these men, who, you are sure, could have had no communication with the first, you then conclude that it must be true ; because they could not have chanced, all of them, to invent the same story, or to have the same dream. And so it is, when you have a number of different marks of truth meeting together, as they do, in the Gospel History. Even if each of these, taken separately, had much less force than it actually has, it would be infinitely unlikely that they

ould all happen to be found united in a false
ory.

§ 8. These arguments, however, have been laid
fore you very briefly; and hereafter, if you will
ady them at leisure, and dwell upon them more
lly, in your own mind, and in conversation with
hers, you will see the force of them still more and
ore.

But though these arguments are enough to satisfy
u that an ordinary Christian, who does not pretend
be a learned man, may yet believe in his religion
better grounds than the Pagans have for believing
airs, there are many other arguments besides;
me of which are quite within the reach of the
learned. In particular, what is called the *inter-*
l evidence of Christianity, that is, the proof drawn
om the character of the religion itself, and of the
ristian Scriptures,—is a kind of evidence which
u will find more and more satisfactory the more
u reflect on and study the subject, if you endeavor
the same time sincerely to act up to the know-
lge you acquire, and to be the better for it in your
3.

LESSON X.

INTERNAL EVIDENCES. PART I.

§ 1. IF the Christian Religion was not from God, it must have been from Man. It must have been a "cunningly-devised fable" of artful impostors, or else a dream of crazy enthusiasts, or some mixture of these two, if it was not really, what it professed to be, a divine revelation.

To examine then the *internal evidence*, is to inquire which of these is the most likely supposition, looking to the *character of the Gospel itself*; to consider whether the religion itself, and the Christian Scriptures, seem more likely to have proceeded from the God of truth, or from mere men, who were either designing impostors, or wild enthusiasts.

Now, it may be said, that we are very imperfect judges of the question *what* is likely to have come from God, since we have such a faint and imperfect knowledge of Him; so that we cannot decide with any confidence what we ought to *expect* in a divine revelation. This is very true. But you should remember that the question is not whether Christianity seems to us likely, *in itself*, to have come from God, and is just such as we should have expected a divine revelation to be; but whether it is *more* likely to *have come from God*, or from Man? For we know

that the religion does exist; and therefore we have to consider not merely whether it is like what might be looked for in a true revelation from God, but also, whether it is *unlike* what might be looked for in the work of human impostors or enthusiasts?

§ 2. Now, this is a question of which we *are* able to judge; because we have, or may acquire, such a knowledge of *human* nature as to decide, on good grounds, what is likely to have proceeded from man's device. And the more you learn of mankind, and of the works of various writers, and again, the more you study the Christian religion, the more you will see how different it is from any religion that mere men (and particularly Jews) would have been likely to contrive.

A great part of this internal evidence is such, as to require some experience and knowledge of the world, and reflection, as well as acquaintance with the Scriptures, to enable any one to take it in properly. But still there are several internal marks of truth that may be pointed out; which, though but a small part of what you may hereafter find, are yet of great importance.

§ 3. For example, if the Christian religion had been contrived and propagated by a number of designing men, in such a way as would have seemed to them the best suited for gaining converts, you may be sure that they would naturally have put forth some book purporting to be written by Jesus him-

self, laying down the principles and precepts of his religion, and answering to the books of the Law written by Moses. All men who were at all disposed to listen to the preaching of the Gospel, and to examine the Christian Scriptures, would have been likely to inquire in the first place, (as, no doubt, many persons did,) for something written by the very Founder of the new religion. If, therefore, there had been any forgery, the forged books, or, at least the principal of them, would certainly have been attributed to Jesus Christ as their author. And all that were not attributed to Him, would naturally have been published with the names of the most distinguished and eminent of his Apostles.

Now, the fact is, as you know, that of all the Christian Scriptures there is no one book professing to be written by Christ himself; and of the four Gospels, there are only two that are attributed even to any of the Apostles as the writers; St. Matthew's and St. John's; and, again, of these two, St. John alone is much distinguished among the Apostles; very little being recorded of St. Matthew in particular. The other two Gospels, and also the book of Acts, which records the first propagation of Christianity, have come down to us as the work of two men, who appear, indeed, to have been companions of some of the most eminent of the Apostles, but who did not claim to be Apostles themselves.

All this is just the reverse of what might have

been expected from crafty and designing men, seeking to impose on the credulous for the purpose of gaining converts.

§ 4. You should remember too, that if the books of the New Testament, which contain accounts of so many wonderful occurrences, were really published near *the very time* when these occurrences were said to have taken place, the accounts in these books must be, substantially, true; because any material falsity would have been immediately exposed by the adversaries of Christianity. And if, on the other hand, these books had been forged a hundred or two hundred years later, and had been falsely attributed to the authors whose names they bear, we cannot doubt that some at least of those books would have been attributed to the great Founder of the religion Himself.

And moreover, on that supposition,—that is, supposing the books to have been composed at a later period than that of the Apostles,—we should undoubtedly have found in them the title of CHRISTIANS applied to the believers in Jesus by themselves. For that title has been so applied, in every age down to this day, by all Christian writers *since* the times of the Apostles. And therefore there can be no doubt that any writer in the second or third or fourth century who was composing pretended gospels and epistles, would have continually called Christians by that very name, which he and all his neighbors had *been accustomed so to employ.*

But in all the books of the New Testament we do not once find the title of Christians *applied by themselves to one another*. The word occurs but three times in the New Testament; in the 11th chapter of Acts, in the 26th chapter of Acts, and in the 1st Epistle of Peter, chapter 4; and in no one of these places is it thus employed. It is mentioned as a name first given to the disciples at Antioch in Syria; doubtless by the Romans, as the word is of Latin formation. King Agrippa, again, uses the word in speaking to Paul; and the Apostle Peter introduces the word as denoting what was accounted a *crime* by the Heathen rulers. "If any man," says he, "suffer for being a Christian, let him not be ashamed."

But addressing the Christians themselves, the apostles never call them by that name, but "*believers*" [or "*faithful*"], "*elect*" [or "*chosen*"], "*saints*" [or "*holy*," that is, set apart and *dedicated* to God's service], "*brethren*," &c.

The reason why the Apostles always used these names in preference to the new name of *Christians*, probably was, in order to point out that Christianity was not so much a *new* religion, as a continuation and fulfilment of the old, and a completion of God's *lgiani on design*; and that all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, were admitted to the same *privileges* — only much enlarged — which had belonged to God's people Israel. Now the Israelites are

continually called in the Old Testament "Brethren," "a Holy People" [or "Saints,"] God's "Chosen" [or "Elect"] People, &c. And hence it was, no doubt, that the Apostles chose to confine themselves to those titles.

After their time, when Jerusalem and its temple had been destroyed, and the admission of Gentiles into the number of God's people ceased to appear anything strange — the church consisting chiefly of Gentiles — then Christians naturally adopted among themselves the title which had long been in common use among the rest of the world.

But whatever was the cause of the earliest Christians abstaining from the use of that title, the *fact*, that they did so abstain, is clear.

Here, therefore, you have a decisive INTERNAL PROOF of the *antiquity* of our sacred books. Had they been composed at a later period than that of the Apostles, we should have found in them the disciples continually addressed by the name of Christians; which is, in fact, never once so used.

§ 5. Again, it is certain that at the time when Jesus appeared, the Jews were earnestly expecting a Christ or Messiah,—(that is, an anointed Deliverer,) who should be a mighty prince, and free them from **subjection** to the Romans, and make them a powerful nation, ruling over all the Gentiles. And this is what is still expected by the Jews at this day. Now, if Jesus and his Apostles had been enthusiasts,

or impostors, or a mixture of the two, they would most likely have conformed to the prevailing expectations of the people. They would have been likely to give out, that the "kingdom of heaven" which was "at hand" was a glorious worldly empire, such as the Jews had fixed their hopes on, instead of a "kingdom not of this world," which was what they did preach.

And we know that the several pretended Christs who appeared a little before the destruction of Jerusalem, and even after it, did profess, each, to come as a temporal deliverer and conqueror, agreeably to the prevailing notions.

Jesus and his disciples, on the contrary, not only proclaimed no temporal kingdom, but did not even promise any worldly success and prosperity to their followers; but told them, that "in the world they should have tribulation." (John xvi. 33.) And this is the more remarkable, because the Jews had been always brought up in the notion that worldly prosperity was a sign of God's favor; such being the rewards promised in the Mosaic law. The hardships and afflictions in this life, which men were told they must make up their minds to, if they became Christians, were not only disheartening, but also likely to raise a prejudice in their minds against Jesus and his disciples, as if they could not be really favored by God; according to the prophecy of Isaiah, "*We did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.*" (liii. 4.)

All this, therefore, is what either impostors or enthusiasts, of any nation, but especially of the Jewish nation, would have been very unlikely to teach.

§ 6. Again, if the Apostles had been designing men, willing to flatter the prejudices of the Jews, for the sake of making converts, but yet afraid of proclaiming Christ as a *temporal* king and deliverer, for fear of provoking the Romans, they would at least have taught that the Jews were to have a *spiritual* superiority; that is, that they were to be still God's peculiar People in a religious point of view. They would have taught that Jerusalem was still to be the Holy City, and that all men were to come thither to worship and offer sacrifices in the Temple, and were to observe all the law of Moses, in order to obtain God's favor. This would have been the most acceptable doctrine to the Jews; and what the Apostles, being themselves Jews, would hardly have failed to teach, if the Gospel had been a scheme of their devising. And accordingly we learn from the Acts, and from several of St. Paul's Epistles, (especially that to the Galatians,) that many of the Jewish converts did labor to bring the Gentile Christians to the observance of the Mosaic law. But the Apostles never would admit this doctrine; but taught that the Gentile Christians were not to take upon them the yoke of the Jewish law, and were perfectly on a level with their Jewish brethren; and that under the Gospel, Jerusalem and its temple had no particular sanctity.

Now all this is just the opposite of what might have been expected of impostors or enthusiasts, preaching a religion of their own fancy or contrivance.

§ 7. It is true, indeed, that to have given this pre-eminence to the Jews, and their city and temple, though it would have been flattering to *Jewish* prejudices, and might have been likely to allure converts of *that* nation, would not have been so acceptable to the Gentiles as a religion which should have put them on an equal footing with the Jews. But if the Gospel had been artfully framed to gratify and allure the Gentiles, it would at least have *one* ordinance which would have been acceptable to the Jews and Gentiles alike ; namely, the *slaying of beasts in sacrifice*. In this point, the Jewish and all the different Pagan religions agreed. Sheep and oxen were slain as burnt-offerings, on the altars both of Jehovah and the heathen gods. Indeed, it is a kind of worship so suitable to men's notions, that it was revived several ages after by the Mohammedans, who have a sacrifice of a camel on certain festivals, as an ordinance of their religion. But at the time when Christianity first arose, neither Jew nor Pagan had ever heard of or conceived such a thing, as a religion in which no animals were sacrificed. They had always been so accustomed to these offerings, that they most likely regarded them as essential to every religion, and were astonished and shocked at

finding that the Christian religion was without them. And it is incredible that Christianity *should* have been without them, if it had been a religion invented by men. It would never have entered into the minds of its authors to make it an exception to all the religions that existed, or that they had ever heard of; and that, too, in a point which would be likely to shock all men's feelings and prejudices.

The whole character, indeed, of the Christian religion differs so widely, in many particulars, both from the Jewish and from all the other religions which had ever existed in the world, that one cannot conceive how any men could, of themselves, have thought of any such system; much less thought of it, as likely to be well received.

And the same may be said of the character of Jesus Himself, as drawn by the Evangelists. It is quite unlike all that had ever before appeared, or been described, or imagined.

§ 8. Another point to be observed is this: that mere men, seeking to propagate their religion in whatever way they might think best, would naturally have been so eager to make converts, that they would not have insisted very much on a strict moral life in those who did but show great zeal in their Master's cause; but would have allowed active services to their party to make amends for some neglect of other duties. Mohammed accordingly declared that the highest place in the divine favor belonged

to those who fought bravely in his cause. And in almost all sects and parties you may see the same disposition in men to reckon zeal in their cause as a virtue so great, that it will excuse many and considerable faults in private life.

This mode of judging, which is so natural to man, is just the opposite of what we find in Jesus Christ and his Apostles. They not only taught their followers to be pure and upright [righteous], and kind and humble, but taught them also that nothing they could say or do in the cause of the Christian faith could make up for the want of these Christian virtues, or would be at all accepted by their Master. He not only compares a man who should hear his precepts without acting upon them, to one who "built a house on the sand," and reproaches those who called him "Lord! Lord!" and "did not the things which he said," (Matt. vii. 26; Luke vi. 46,) but He also declares that those who had "preached in his name," and in his name even "done many wonderful works," should be disowned and rejected by him if they were "workers of iniquity." (Matt. vii. 22, 23.) And the Apostles, in like manner, taught their converts that their professing the Christian faith was a reason for requiring not the less, but the more, strictness of morals from them, (1 Cor. v. 11, 12;) and that even the miraculous powers bestowed on them were worthless, if they had not *that* charity which is humble, gentle, patient and *self-denying*. (1 Cor. xiii.)

All this is what we might have expected from teachers sent from God. And experience shows how different it is from what might have been expected of mere human teachers, acting according to their own judgment and their natural feelings.

LESSON XI.

INTERNAL EVIDENCES. PART II.

§ 1. You may observe, again, that the *kind* of moral duty which Jesus and his Apostles taught, was not what was the most likely to gain them popularity with their hearers. The Jews had a great deal of national pride in being God's holy and peculiar people; they looked on the Gentiles as unclean and outcasts: and had a particular hatred and contempt for the Samaritans. The Romans, again, were no less proud of their military glory and political power; and the Greeks of their superior wisdom and refinement. And all were zealous for the glory, and greatness, and superiority, each, of his own country. It was not acceptable to any of these to be taught to "love their enemies," — to return good for evil, — to be humble and forgiving, — patient under persecution, — gentle and kind to all men; and lastly to consider men of every race, and of every station, as

on a level in respect to the Gospel promises ; and that, in God's sight, there was to be "neither Greek nor Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free." (Coloss. iii. 11.)

Moreover, party-spirit ran very high among the Jews ; especially between the sects of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Now, an enthusiast would have most likely been a zealous partisan of one of these sects ; and a scheming impostor, if he did not join one of them, would have been likely to aim at the favor of both, by flattering each in turn, and gratifying each by exposing the faults of their opponents. Jesus, on the contrary, in his discourses to each party, sets before them their own errors, (Luke xi. 42, &c. ; xx. 27 ;) and he does the same in respect of the Jews and Samaritans. (Luke x. 33 ; John iv. 22.)

All this is worthy of a "Teacher sent from God," and is quite different from what we might expect of mere human teachers.

§ 2. Many men, it is true, would be ready to praise and to recommend a life of *greater* purity and uprightness, than their neighbors, or they themselves, are accustomed to practise. Several of the ancient heathen philosophers wrote moral treatises containing some excellent precepts, and describing a much higher degree of virtue than was commonly found in the lives of the heathen generally, or even in the lives of those very philosophers themselves. And if

the New Testament writers had been men of the higher and more educated classes, accustomed to converse with the learned, and to study philosophical works, instead of being mostly poor and ignorant Jewish fishermen and artisans, it would not have been wonderful that they should have taught a higher degree of morality than what men in general practised.

But the Gospel went beyond, not merely what men *practised*, but what they *approved*. It was not merely *better* than men's *conduct*; but, in several points, *contrary* to their *principles*. For instance, "to love one's enemies," — to return "good for evil," — to be "meek and lowly in spirit," — "not easily provoked," but forbearing, submissive, and long-suffering, — all this was not merely not *practised* by the ancient Heathen and Jews, but it was not even *admired*; on the contrary, it was regarded with scorn, as base and mean-spirited.

§ 3. And what is more, even now, we may often find professed Christians, while they hold in reverence the very books which teach such lessons, yet not only practising, but approving the very opposite. We may find some who value themselves on a quick resentment of affronts, (calling it "indignation,") and in using what they call "strong language," towards opponents; that is, reviling and insult. And even fierce strife and bitter persecution will often be admired as "manly and spirited conduct," and

as a noble Christian zeal. And you will find all this even in men who venerate the very Gospel, which relates how Jesus rebuked his Apostles for offering to call down fire from heaven on his enemies; and told them that they "knew not what manner of spirit they were of."

Since, then, Christianity is opposed not only to men's natural *inclinations*, but also, in some points, to their *ideas*, of what is dignified and praiseworthy, you may see how incredible it is that scheming or ambitious men should have contrived a religion which condemns not only men's *conduct*, but their *principles*.

§ 4. Then, again, if you look to the style of writing in the historical books, (the four Gospels and the Acts,) you will observe that neither the miracles nor the sufferings of Christ or his Apostles are boastfully set forth, and eloquently described and remarked upon; as would have been natural for writers desirous of making a strong impression on the reader. There is no endeavor to excite wonder, or admiration, or compassion or indignation. There is nothing, in short, such as we should have expected in writers who were making up a marvellous story to produce an effect on men's feelings and imaginations. The miracles performed, and the instances of heroic fortitude displayed, are all related, briefly, calmly, and drily, and almost with an air of indifference, as if they were matters of every-day occur-

rence, and which the readers were familiar with. And this is, indeed, one strong proof that the readers to whom these books were addressed, — the early Christians, — really were (as the books themselves give us to understand they were) *familiar* with these things ; in short, that the persecutions endured, and the signs displayed, by the Apostles, really were, in those times and countries, common and notorious.

You should observe, also, the candid and frank simplicity with which the New Testament writers describe the weakness and faults of the disciples ; not excepting some of the most eminent among the Apostles. Their “slowness of heart,” [that is dulness of understanding,] — their want of faith [trust] in their Master, — and their worldly ambition and jealousy among themselves, are spoken of without reserve, and as freely as the faults of their adversaries.

§ 5. This, and some of the other points in the New Testament that have been noticed, would be very remarkable if met with in any *one* book ; but it is still more so, when you consider that the same character runs through *all* the books of the New Testament ; which are no less than twenty-seven distinct compositions, of several different kinds, written apparently at considerable intervals of time from each other, and which have come down to us as the works of no less than eight different authors. You might safely ask an unbeliever to point out the

same number — or half the number — of writers in behalf of any Sect, Party, or System, all of them without a single exception, writing with the same modest simplicity, and without any attempt to excuse or to extol, and set off themselves.

In this respect, and in many others, both the Christian religion itself, and the Christian Scriptures, are totally unlike what they might have been expected to be, if they had been from Man. *They appear too simple, candid, and artless, to have come from impostors ; and too calm, sober, and wise for enthusiasts.* And yet, if Christianity were the device of men, these men must have been either the most deliberate, artful, and wicked of impostors, or else by far the wildest and maddest set of enthusiasts that were ever combined together ; since they do not (as many crazy enthusiasts have done) appeal merely to their own inward feelings and their dream or visions, but to matters of fact coming under the evidence of the senses ; in which none but a complete madman could be mistaken, and most of which their adversaries were free to judge of as well as themselves.

LESSON XII.

INTERNAL EVIDENCES. PART III.

§ 1. THESE few heads, then, of internal evidence, which have been here briefly sketched out, would, even alone, furnish good reason for believing that the Gospel did not, and could not have come from Man ; and that, therefore, it must have come from God. And yet these internal marks of truth which have been here pointed out by way of specimens, are but a very small part of what you may hereafter make out for yourself ; and are not even selected as being the principal and the most conclusive, but only as those which could the most easily be put before you in a small compass. At some future time, when your power of judging is improved, you will feel the very character of our Saviour, as described in the Gospels, to be (as I have hinted to you), one of the strongest proofs, and the most satisfactory and delightful proof, of the truth of his religion.

But the moral excellence of his character, as drawn by the Evangelists, is what could not be set forth, so as to do justice to the argument founded on it, within a small space. For, it would be necessary to dwell at some length on each of his sayings and acts, so as to point out the kindness and tender-

ness of heart, — the persevering benevolence, — the gentleness combined with dignity and firmness, — the active and unwearied, yet calm zeal with which He labored for the good of mankind, — and the other great and amiable qualities which He displayed on so many occasions. And to do this properly, would require a volume nearly as large as the whole of this.

But you may, in a great measure, supply to yourself such a work, by attentively reading and reflecting on, with a view to the present argument, the Gospels themselves; and, especially, such passages as those referred to below.*

§ 2. In conducting for yourself such a study as we have been suggesting, these three points should be attended to, and steadily kept before the mind.

First, — The picture drawn by the Evangelists is, evidently, an *unstudied* one. There is nothing in it of the nature of *eulogium* and *panegyric*. They do not seem laboring to set forth and call attention to the excellence of their Master's character. They do not break out into any exclamations of admiration of it; and, indeed, make hardly any remarks on it at all; but simply relate what He said and did.

Secondly, — If they had had the inclination, they do not seem to have had the *ability*, to draw a ficti-

* See note A at the end of this Lesson.

tious character of great moral beauty, devised by their own imagination. They write like (what they were) plain, unpractised authors, without learning, or eloquence, or skill in composition.

Now let any one try the experiment of setting some person, of great ability as a writer, to draw up a fictitious narrative concerning some imaginary personage. Let him enter into *particular details* as fully as the Evangelists have done; and let him do his best to paint a character as consistent, and as morally beautiful, as that of Jesus. You would see how imperfectly he would succeed; and how far he would fall short of the picture drawn (and which must, therefore, be a *real* picture) by untaught Jewish fishermen and peasants.

And what we have been saying, is confirmed by certain works commonly called the "Spurious Gospels;" of which some considerable portions have come down to us. They seem to have been composed (some of them as early as the fourth century) partly from invention, and partly from some vague traditions that were afloat. But they were never, as far as we can learn, received by any Church as Scripture. These narratives profess to give several particulars of the life of Jesus, — especially of his childhood, — which are not to be found in the genuine Gospels.

Now it is remarkable, that though the writers evidently designed to raise admiration of our Lord,

and manifest that design very strongly, yet the picture they draw of Him is, in many points, contemptible or odious; for instance, they represent Him as exercising, when a child, miraculous powers, not for any purpose connected with his ministry, but merely for his own amusement; as any ordinary child would be likely to do, if gifted with such powers.

And He is also represented as so passionate and mischievous a child, that he miraculously struck dead another boy for accidentally running against him.

In short, his character as given in these "spurious Gospels" is quite a contrast to that given by each of our four Evangelists. And the whole tone of the narratives themselves — the spurious and the genuine — is no less contrasted.

§ 3. Thirdly, — You are to keep in mind, that the private moral character of Jesus is *unimpeached* even by the opponents of his Gospel. None of them have ever imputed to Him avarice, or cruelty, or any kind of profligate sensuality. Now there is hardly any other very eminent man of whom this can be said; however groundless may be the charges brought against any of them. Certainly, no man was ever so unimpeached in character who had so many and such bitter enemies; — enemies who would have been glad to get hold of any story, however false, or even any suspicion, that could raise a prejudice against Him.

But even the Jews, in that book already mentioned, (Lesson v. § 2,) though they lavish on Him all the most abusive epithets, yet do not charge Him with any one immoral act, in his private life.

And you should keep in mind, among other things, that this man, whose extraordinary purity of moral character is thus strongly attested, did certainly *profess* to be a heaven-sent messenger, and to possess miraculous powers. Now any one who can believe that one whom he considers a *good man* would *falsely* put forth such pretensions, deceiving his disciples, or suffering them to deceive themselves, as to his miraculous powers, and thus practising what is called a "pious fraud," (in reality, an impious fraud) for the sake of spreading his doctrines, — any one who can believe this of one whom he accounts a virtuous man, must be himself a person of exceedingly low moral notions.

But all that relates to our Lord's moral character is a thing rather to be felt than described : and you will feel it the more, and the better estimate the force of the arguments drawn from it, in proportion to your sincere desire and endeavor to conform your own character to the purest and best pattern you can find.

The more; indeed, you learn of mankind, and of the Gospel, and the more you study, (with a sincere desire to know what is true, and to do what is right,) both other books, ancient and modern, and also the

Christian Scriptures, the more you will perceive (as has been above said) how unlikely the Christian religion is to have been devised by man, and how well suited it is to meet the wants of man, and to improve his nature.

§ 4. But when you do come to perceive the force of the internal evidence for the truth of Christianity, you will find that though it may be one of the reasons to *have*, it will often not be the best to *give*. A great part of this kind of evidence, is better fitted to furnish a consoling satisfaction to the mind of a believer, than to convince an unbeliever. For there is much of the excellence of the Christian religion that can only be learned fully from experience. Sincere believers perceive in it a wisdom, and purity, and nobleness of character, which are not completely understood, nor thoroughly liked and relished by any one, till he has *become*, in a great degree, what the Christian religion is designed to *make* him, — till he has something of such a character as the Gospel does not *find* in man, but *forms* in him.

And this seems to be that *Christian experience* which the Apostles, especially St. John and St. Paul, often appeal to as an evidence, (not indeed to unbelievers, who could not have had this experience; but) in addressing their converts. "The Spirit itself" (says St. Paul, Rom. viii. 16) "beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God," &c.

It seems, indeed, to have been designed, that man's conscience should bear witness not only *against* what is *wrong*, but also in *favor* of what is right. And hence, a Christian who has for some time been laboring to conform himself to the Gospel, and who finds his religious notions becoming clearer, and that he is growing better, and holier, and happier, gains, by this, an experimental proof, which confirms the other proofs, of the truth of his religion. His conscience testifies that he is practically influenced and "led by the Spirit of Christ ;" and thus he is "filled," (as St. Paul says, Rom. xv. 13,) "with all joy and peace in believing."

And this is a kind of evidence which will become, to such a Christian, stronger and stronger, the more he "grows in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour." But this proof, from personal experience, is fitted, (as has been said) not so much for the first conversion of an unbeliever, as for the confirmation of a practical Christian ; because no one else can feel, or fully understand and value it.

§ 5. A life of genuine Christian virtue does, indeed, meet with some degree of approbation from most men, even though unbelievers ; and it appears, accordingly, to have been, in the earliest times, a help towards the conversion of some of them. (1 Peter ii. 12.) And it is for you to bring before the minds of those you live with, this kind of testimony to Christianity from its moral excellence ; not to

much by talking of it, as by setting it forth in your life, and "letting your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. v. 16.) But you must not expect that any one will completely feel all the force of this kind of internal evidence of Christianity, till he shall have become himself a believer, and a sincerely practical believer. It is not easy to give a clear description of the inside of a well-built and commodious house, to one who is on the outside, and has never been in such a house, but always lived in a tent, like the wild Arabs, or in a smoky slovenly hovel. But you may be able to point out to him enough of what is on the outside, to induce him to desire to come in; and when he *has* done this, he will gradually be able to judge for himself; and by the habits of neatness, order, cleanliness, and decency, which he will be likely to acquire by living in such a house, will gain more and more the power of perceiving the commodiousness of it. And so it is with the evidences of Christianity. As soon as a man has seen enough, as he easily may do, of good evidence, to convince him that it is from God, if he will then be induced to *come in*, and heartily embrace it, and endeavor to understand it, and to apply it to himself, so as to be the better for it in his life, he will then be rewarded by a fuller and clearer view of many other evidences which he could not, at first, take in. And such a person will

thus obtain the fulfilment of that promise of our Master : " If any man is willing to do [will do] the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." (John vii. 17.)

§ 6. Great care should be taken not to misunderstand what has just been said ; because you may hear from some persons what appears, at the first glance, very like it, though, in reality, quite different. I mean, that you may meet with persons who profess to despise and dislike all that is commonly called " evidences for the truth of Christianity ;" and who say, " Let a man but feel the *want* of it : — let him feel how suitable Christianity is to the needs of such a being as man ; — how it supplies such motives, and such guidance, and hopes, and consolations, as human nature requires ; and then he will want no evidence to convince him of its truth : " — with a great deal more to the same purpose.

Now, all this may seem at the first glance very plausible ; but, on reflection, you will perceive that it is setting up Man — each man for himself — to be the standard of divine truth. On this principle, each one is to receive as a revelation whatever religion suits his own judgment of what is good, and his own wants, and wishes, and tastes. Now, we know how widely men differ from one another on these points, and what various and erroneous systems they are, accordingly, disposed to embrace. For instance, the Jews, at the time when Jesus

appeared, felt a *want* of a victorious and mighty earthly deliverer, who should exalt their nation, and reign in great worldly splendor. The kingdom of Jesus, which was a "kingdom not of this world," and which admitted "Gentiles to be fellow-heirs," was precisely what they did *not* want. It did not at all suit their hopes, and wishes, and habits of thought. And, accordingly, the greater part of them rejected Jesus, and followed those false Christs who promised to lead them to victory over the Romans. Jesus, indeed, appealed to the evidence of his mighty works, while those false Christs produced no evidence at all, except the suitableness of what they taught to the judgment, and to the feelings and wants of the Jews. But most of the Jews, acting on the very principle I have been speaking of, disregarded evidence altogether, and gave themselves up to their own feelings, resolving to believe what suited them best.

In like manner, when Mohammed proclaimed himself a prophet, though he produced no miraculous evidence, he was joined by a multitude of followers. His religion suited a sensual, and gross-minded, and warlike, and ambitious people. He promised them victory and plunder in this world, and, after death, a paradise of sensual enjoyments. And, finding that such a religion suited their tastes and wants, they embraced it without seeking for any further evidence of its truth. The Hindoos, again,

and other Pagans, adhere to their own religion without any evidence, and find it suitable to their own wants and tastes.

And the same must be the case with all the most extravagant corruptions of Christianity, that have arisen from time to time : such as that of the ancient Gnostics, who thought to obtain immortal life without practising moral virtue, and who had a taste for idle speculations concerning the nature of God. No one of these corrupt religions could ever have arisen at all, or have been received, if those who introduced it, and their followers, had not felt a “ want ” of some such system.

It is plain, therefore, that the principle I have been speaking of, tends to lead men into an endless variety of errors.

§ 7. But the course I have been recommending is, in reality, exactly the reverse of all this. Jesus tells us that if any man is willing and desirous to do the will of his Heavenly Father, he shall know the truth of the doctrine. You must begin, therefore, by a readiness to follow — not *your own* will, but — the will of God ; and to receive whatever shall appear to come from Him, however contrary to your own expectations or wishes. And if in this temper of mind you proceed to examine those evidences which Jesus and his Apostles appeal to, you will see good reason for believing in the Gospel. And then, if you embrace the Gospel and labor to conform

your heart and your life to it, you will perceive that it does suit the nature and the real wants of man. For you will perceive that it tends to enlighten his judgment, and to improve his moral taste, and to lead him to live according to the best principles of his nature, and to secure him the truest peace and comfort. And in proportion as you come to perceive all this, you will thus obtain a strong additional *confirmation* of the truth of Christianity.

But you will have obtained this, not by rejecting evidence, and resolving to conform your religious belief to your own tastes and inclinations ; but, on the contrary, by striving to conform your own tastes and inclinations to your religious belief.

§ 8. Observe, then, that this last is a kind of evidence which *all* Christians ought to have, and will have, more and more, in proportion as they fairly try the experiment of conforming themselves to the Gospel. Different persons may have been led by different kinds of proof, to embrace the Gospel : but when they *have* embraced it, they may all hope for this *confirmation* of their faith, by this further proof from experience. Suppose, for instance, some one should offer to several persons, suffering under a painful and dangerous disease, some medicine, which he declared would relieve their sufferings, and restore them to health ; it would be natural and reasonable for them to ask for some testimony or other proof, to assure them of this, before they made

trial of the medicine : then, suppose them all to be so far convinced,—some by one proof, and some by another,—as to make trial of the medicine ; and that they found themselves daily getting better as they took it ; they would then have — all of them — an evidence from experience, confirming the former proofs that had originally brought them to make the trial.

But these persons, if they were wise, would be convinced of the virtues of the medicine, not from its being immediately pleasant to the taste, or from its suddenly exciting and cheering them up like a strong cordial ; but from its gradually restoring their strength, and removing the symptoms of the disease, and advancing them daily towards perfect health. So also, Christian experience, you should remember, does not consist in violent transports, or any kind of sudden and overpowering impression on the feelings ; but in a steady, habitual, and continued improvement of the heart and the conduct.

§ 9. We do not say, you will observe, that you, or other Christians, may not experience such sudden transporting impressions as those just alluded to. But it is a settled habit, — an improved and improving character,—that constitutes the Christian experience which we find described and alluded to in the New Testament Scriptures ; which thus affords an additional internal evidence of their having been written

by sober-minded men.* For the Apostles, if they had been wild enthusiasts, would have felt, and have taught their converts to expect the sudden excitement of vehement emotions; and would have referred to some immediate, single, and momentary impression of that kind, as Christian experience. But what they do teach, and perpetually impress on us, is, "He that is Christ's, hath crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts:"—the test they refer to is, a "growth in grace and knowledge,"—a calm, gradual, and steady advancement in "bringing forth fruit with *Patience*." (Luke viii. 15.) For "*PATIENCE*" (says St. Paul, Rom. v. 4,) "worketh *EXPERIENCE*; and Experience, Hope; and Hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

NOTE A.

WITH regard to the passages here referred to, (and to which many more might have been added,) you should observe that the picture they form of our Lord's character cannot but be a correct one; because if He had really been at all a different kind of man from what He is represented, his enemies

* See 2 Pet. i. 5; and 1 Thess. iv. 1; and Galat. vi. 9, &c.

would not have failed to notice, and to take advantage of this. Now, not only do they never charge Him with anything immoral, but He and His Apostles continually appeal to all men's testimony as to the moral excellence of his character, as a matter undeniable and notorious.

See John vii. 46–51, viii. 46, and x. 32; Matt. xxvi. 59, xxvii. 23, 24; Luke xxiii. 13–15; Acts iii. 13, 14; 1 Peter ii. 21–23.

And it should be observed that this moral *teaching* is to be regarded as an appeal of this kind; since if He had been guilty of any such moral wrong as He censured and rebuked, or had not been, Himself, a model of the virtues He taught, his enemies would have been sure to detect, and to reproach his inconsistency.

- His extensive **BENEVOLENCE** and compassionateness, are shown in the following (and many other) passages: John iv.; Luke ix. 55, and x. 30–37; Mark vii. 26, &c., and x. 13–21, and 45–52; Matt. ix. 36, &c.; Luke xiii. 16, xiv. 12, &c., xxii. 50, 51, xxiv. 34; Matt. xviii. 11, &c.

In reference to his *kind and affectionate* character, see John xi. xix. 25–27, &c.; Luke xix. 41; xxii. 61; Matt. xiv. 27–31.

For indications of **MEEKNESS** and Humility, see Matt. ix. 28, xviii. xxvi. 50; John xiii. 4, &c.; Matt. v. 1–12; Luke xxii. 24, &c.

For indications of **MORAL COURAGE**, firmness,

and resignation: Luke iv. 23, &c., xiii. 31, &c.; xviii. 29, &c.; John xi. 7, &c.; Mark x. 32, &c.; Matt. xxvi. 39–46; John xviii. 4, &c.

For indications of SINCERITY, and rebukes of the hypocrite, and the seeker after popularity, Matt. vi. 1–18, x. 16–39, xxii. 18, &c.; Mark xii. 38–40; Luke xi. 44, &c.; John xvi. 1–6.

For indications of MODERATION, and absence of all enthusiasm, and all affected austerity, Matt. xi. 19, xxiii. 23; Luke v. 29–35; John ii. 1, &c.; Mark xii. 17.

The passages above referred to contain a few out of many of the indications of a part, — and only a part, — of the virtues of our Lord's character. Many others will strike you, in your perusal of the Gospels with this view.

But this study will affect different persons very unequally, according to *their own* character. Those of a low tone of moral sentiment, will be but little struck with the character of Jesus. Those of a somewhat higher and purer mind, will feel it more; especially, if they have also a considerable knowledge of mankind in general. And one who is, — like Nathanael, — “an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile,” will (mentally) exclaim, like him, “Rabbi, thou art the Son of God! Thou art the King of Israel!”

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LESSON XIII.

OBJECTIONS. PART I.

§ 1. As there are persons who reject the Christian religion, you may perhaps suppose that they have undertaken to refute the proofs of it; and that they have found answers, such as satisfy themselves, to the evidences and reasons on which it is believed: or at least to some of the principal of the reasons, such as have been just put before you.

But you are not likely to meet with any one who will undertake this. At least, no such attempt has been made in any book that has been hitherto published. Unbelievers, though they have had nearly eighteen centuries to try, have never yet been able to show, nor have they even attempted to show, how it could be that so many marks of truth should be found in the Gospel history, supposing it false. Of these marks of truth, even that portion (though far short of the whole) which have been just laid before you, are such as certainly never met together at least in any *known* false story; and how it is that they are found in the Gospel history, if that be not true, has never been explained. No one has ever explained in what way the first disciples of Jesus, circumstanced as they were, succeeded, or could have succeeded, in propagating as we know

they did, such a religion as theirs, supposing it to be, not from God, but from Man.

§ 2. And yet many persons have written and spoken against Christianity. How then have they proceeded? Instead of accounting for the introduction of Christianity by natural causes, and on the supposition of its being a mere human device, they are accustomed to put forward various difficulties, and start *objections* against several points in the religion. And unlearned Christians often find themselves hard pressed with these objections; and suppose that they are called upon either to find answers to everything that can be urged against the Christian religion, and give a satisfactory solution of every difficulty that is pointed out, or else to abandon their faith; or, at least, confess that they cannot defend it.

Now you have, indeed, been taught that it is a Christian's duty to be "ready to give an answer to every one that asks a reason of the hope that is in you." But this is a very different thing from being prepared to answer every *objection*. If a person asks you why you are a Christian, or, on what grounds you would call on a Pagan to embrace Christianity, this is quite a different thing from his asking you, "how can you explain this?" "and how do you reconcile that?" "and how do you remove such and such difficulties?"

§ 3. I am not saying, you will observe, that no

such questions as these ought ever to be asked ; or that there is no occasion to seek any answers to them ; but only that they are not at all the *same thing* as the other question — the inquiry for a reason of our Christian hope. And it should also be observed, that it is not the most natural and reasonable way of examining any question to *begin* with looking to the objections against any system, or plan, or history, before we inquire into the reasons in its favor. And yet it is thus that some people are apt to proceed in the case of the Christian religion. Having been brought up in it from childhood, and received it merely as the religion of their fathers, they perhaps meet with some one who starts objections against several points ; and then they think themselves obliged to find an answer to each objection, and to explain every difficulty in the Gospel system, without having begun by learning anything of the positive evidence on which it is founded. And the end of this sometimes is, that their minds are disturbed, and, perhaps, their faith overthrown, before they have even begun to inquire into the subject in the right way.

Some persons will advise you, for fear of having your mind thus unsettled, to resolve at once never to listen to any objections against Christianity, or to make any inquiries, or converse at all on the subject with any one who speaks of any doubts or difficulties ; but to make up your mind once for all, to hold

fast the faith you have been brought up in, on the authority of wiser men than yourself, and never to attend to any reasoning on the subject.

§ 4. You have already seen, that if our forefathers had gone upon this plan, we should at this day have been Pagans like them ; and that if all the world had proceeded thus when the Apostles first appeared, all men would have kept to the religion of their fathers, (as the chief part of the most learned and most powerful among them did, — see 1 Cor. i. 23,) and Christianity would not have existed at all. And you ought to observe, also, that when a learned man says that ordinary Christians had better shut their ears against all doubts and arguments, and be satisfied to take the word of the learned for the truth of the religion, a suspicion is often raised, that he does not really believe it himself, but wishes to support it for the sake of the lower classes ; and considers that the less they think, and reason, and inquire, the less danger there is of their being undeceived. Such appears to have been, generally, the state of mind of the educated classes among the ancient Heathen, in respect to their religion. They thought it useful for the vulgar to believe in the fables about their gods ; and being aware that these would not stand the test of examination, they did not approve of any inquiry on the subject.

§ 5. But it is likely that many of those who discourage ordinary Christians from using their

reason on the subject of Christian evidences, are not themselves unbelievers, but are merely timorous and distrustful, and see the dangers on one side, while they overlook those on the other. They see that there is a danger of men making an ill use of their reason : which there certainly is, as well as of any other gift. The servant, in the parable, (Matt. xxv. 25, Luke xix. 20,) who was entrusted with one talent, might have employed it ill, and lost it ; but it was not, therefore, the safe course to lay it by in a napkin. There is danger of the misuse of money, or of food. We know that many shorten their lives by intemperance. Yet food was bestowed for the support of life, and not for its destruction. And so, also, God has provided evidence to prove the truth of Christianity, and has given us the faculty of reason, by which we can understand that evidence ; and what is more, He has expressly directed us (1 Peter iii. 15) to make that use of the faculty. But in the use of all his gifts there is danger ; which we cannot escape without diligent caution. And those who would guard men against the danger of doubt and disbelief, by discouraging the use of reason, are creating a much greater danger of the same kind, by the distrust which they manifest,—by appearing to suspect that their religion will not stand inquiry.

§ 6. But is it, then, to be expected, that you should be prepared to answer every objection that

may be brought against your religion? By no means. You may have very good reason for believing something, against which there are many objections; and objections which you cannot answer, for want of sufficient knowledge of the subject. In many other cases besides that of religion, there will be difficulties on both sides of a question, which even the wisest man cannot clear up; though he may, perhaps, plainly see on which side the *greater* difficulties lie; and may even see good reasons for being fully satisfied, *which* ought to be believed. Thus, in the case before mentioned, of the bed of sea-shells, found far above the present level of the sea, there are strong objections against supposing either that the sea was formerly so much higher than now, or that those beds were so much lower, and were heaved up, many hundred feet, to the height where they now lie. And yet no one who has examined and inquired into the subject, has any doubt that those beds of shells do exist, and must, at some former time, have been the bottom of a sea.

To take another instance: the astronomer, Copernicus, first taught, about three hundred years ago, that the earth (which had formerly been supposed to be at rest in the midst of the universe, with all the heavenly bodies moving round it) travels round the sun in the course of a year, and is, at the same time, turning also on its own axis, — that is, rolling over like a ball, — every twenty-four hours. This

theory of his (which has long since been universally admitted) was at first met by many objections ; several of which, neither he, nor any one else in those days, was able to answer. Many years afterwards, when astronomy was better understood, some objections were answered, and difficulties explained. But there were others, of which no explanation could be found, till a very short time ago, in the memory of many persons now living. Yet, long before that time, notwithstanding the objections, there was no one at all acquainted with the subject, who had any doubt of the earth's motion.

§ 7. Again, it is perfectly well established, that *ærolites*,—that is, stones from the sky,—have fallen in various countries, and at different times, to a considerable number. They are composed of iron, or a peculiar kind of iron-stone, and are of all sizes, from a few ounces to several hundred weight. No explanation has been given of them that is at all satisfactory. There are strong objections against supposing them either to have been thrown out by volcanoes in the moon, or to be fragments torn off from some other planets, or to be formed in the air. In future generations, perhaps, when chemistry and astronomy are much improved, more may be known about these wonderful stones. But, in the mean time, the fact of their having fallen is so well attested by numerous witnesses, that in spite of all the difficulties, no one who has inquired into the

subject, has any doubt the thing has really occurred, however incredible it might have appeared.

Then, again, if we look to human transactions, we shall find several portions of history, even those which no one has any doubt of, full of such strange events, that difficulties might be pointed out in the accounts of them, and strong objections raised against the history, even when it rests on such satisfactory evidence as to be believed in spite of those objections. In the history, for instance, of Europe, for the last forty years, there are many events so improbable in themselves, — especially all that relate to the wonderful rise, and greatness, and overthrow, of the empire of Napoleon Bonaparte, — that it would be easy to find objections sufficient to convince many persons that the history could not be true, were it not that it is so well attested as to be believed notwithstanding all the difficulties.

Numberless other examples might be brought, to show how many things there are which men believe, — and believe on very good grounds, in spite of strong and real objections, which they cannot satisfactorily answer; these being outweighed by more and greater difficulties on the opposite side.

§ 8. As for the particular objections which have been brought against the Christian religion, and the Christian Scriptures, it would, of course, be impossible to put before you, in a short compass, even the chief part of them, together with the answers that

have been given. But what is of the most importance is, to lay down, generally, the right way of viewing objections, either against our religion, or against anything else ; namely, first, that you should not *begin* by considering the objections to any statement or system, before you are acquainted with the evidence in favor of it ; and, secondly, that you should not think yourself bound to renounce your faith, if you cannot answer every objection, and clear up every difficulty that may be raised ; but should remember that many things are believed, and must be believed, against which there are strong objections that have never been completely answered, when there are stronger objections against the opposite belief.

LESSON XIV.

OBJECTIONS. PART II.

§ 1. OF the objections that have been brought against Christianity, there are some which ordinary Christians may learn enough to be able to refute for themselves. There are others, again, to which learned and able men have found answers, but which the generality of Christians cannot be expected to answer, or even to understand ; and, again, there

are other objections which no man, however learned, and however intelligent, can expect to answer fully, on account of the imperfect knowledge which belongs to man in this present life. For you are to observe, that when we speak of any one as having much knowledge and intelligence, we mean that he is so *comparatively with other men*; since the best informed man knows but few things, compared with those of which he is ignorant; and the wisest man cannot expect to understand all the works, and all the plans, of his Creator. Now this is particularly important to be kept in mind in the present case; because Christianity, we should remember, is a scheme imperfectly understood. What is revealed to us, must be (supposing the religion to be true) but a part, and, perhaps, but a small part, of the whole truth. There are many things of which, at present, we can know little or nothing, which have, or may have, a close connection with the Christian religion. For instance, we are very little acquainted with more than a very *small part* of the *universe*; of the *whole* history, past and future, of the *world* we inhabit; and of the whole of *man's existence*.

This earth is but a speck compared with the rest of the planets which move round the sun, together with the enormous mass of the sun itself; to say nothing of the other heavenly bodies. It is likely that all these are inhabited; and it may be, that the Gospel which has been declared to us may be but

one small portion of some vast scheme which concerns the inhabitants of numerous other worlds.

Then, again, we have no knowledge how long this our world is to continue. For aught we know, the Christian religion may not have existed a fifth part, or a fiftieth part of its whole time; and it may, perhaps, have not produced yet one fiftieth of the effects it is destined to produce.

And we know that as it holds out the hope of immortality beyond the grave, it is connected with man's condition, not merely during his short life on earth, but for eternity. ✕

§ 2. Seeing, then, that Christianity, if true, must be a scheme so partially and imperfectly revealed to us, and so much connected with things of which man can have little or no knowledge, we might have expected that difficulties should be found in it, which the wisest of men are unable to explain. And men, truly wise, are not surprised or disheartened at meeting with such difficulties; but are prepared to expect them from the nature of the case.

The view which we have of any portion of a system, of which the whole is not before us, has been aptly compared to a map of an *inland country*; in which we see rivers without source or mouth, and roads that seem to lead to nothing. A person who knows anything of geography, understands at once, on looking at such a map, that the sources and mouths of the rivers, and the towns which the roads

lead to, are somewhere beyond the boundaries of the district; though he may not know where they lie. But any one who was very ill-informed might be inclined presumptuously to find fault with the map which showed him only a part of the course of the rivers and roads. And it is the same with anything else, of which we see only a part, unless we recollect that it is but a part, and make allowance accordingly for our imperfect view of it.

There is much truth, therefore, in the Scotch proverb, that "children and fools should never see half-finished works." They not only cannot guess what the whole will be when complete, but are apt to presume to form a judgment without being aware of their own ignorance. If you were to see, for the first time, the beginning of the manufacture of some of the commonest articles, such as, for instance, the paper that is before you, you would be at a loss, if you had never heard the process described, to guess what the workman was going to make. You would see a great trough full of a liquid like pap; and would never think of such a thing as a sheet of paper being made from it. And if you were to see the first beginning of the building of a house or a ship, you would be very unfit to judge what sort of a work it would be when completed.

And the same holds good, only in a greater degree, in respect to the plans of Divine wisdom. So small a portion of them is made known to us,

that it would be strange if we did not find many difficulties, — such as Man cannot expect to explain, — in that portion which we do see.

§ 3. Although, however, you must not expect to be able to answer all objections that may be brought, you will be able, in proportion as you improve in knowledge, and in the habit of reflecting and reasoning on the subject, to find satisfactory answers to many which at first sight may have appeared very perplexing. And in particular, you will find that some difficulties in the Christian religion, which have been brought forward as objections to it, will appear to be, on the contrary, evidences in support of it. They may, indeed, still continue to be *difficulties* which you cannot fully explain, and yet may be so far from being *objections* against your faith, that they will even go to confirm it.

For instance, the bad lives of many Christians, who profess to expect that Jesus Christ will judge them, and yet act in opposition to what He taught, and to the example He gave, is an objection which has often been brought forward by unbelievers, and which probably influences their minds more than any other. Here is a religion, they say, which professes to have been designed to work a great reformation in Man's character, and yet we find the believers in this religion living as if there were no world but the present, and giving themselves up to all the base and evil passions of human nature, just

as the Heathen did. And besides those who are altogether careless and thoughtless about their religion, we find (they say) many who talk and think much of it, and profess great Christian zeal, and who yet live in hatred against their fellow Christians, indulging in envy, slander, strife, and persecution of one another; and all the time professing to be devoted followers of One who taught them to love even their enemies, to return blessing for cursing, and to be known as his disciples by their love towards each other.*

§ 4. Now it is certainly most mortifying and disheartening to a sincere Christian to find that his religion has produced hitherto so much less improvement among mankind than he might have been disposed to expect from it. And you should consider deeply what a double guilt Christians will have to answer for, whose life is such as to bring an ill name on their religion; and who thus not only rebel against their Master, but lead others to reject Him. But when the evil lives of so many Christians are brought as an objection against the Christian religion, you may reply, by asking whether this does not show how unlikely such a religion is to have been devised by Man? If you saw in any country the fields carefully ploughed and cleared, and sown with wheat, and yet continually sending up a growth

* John xiii. 34.

of grass and thistles, which choked the wheat, wherever they were not weeded out again and again, you would not suppose wheat to be indigenous (that is, to grow wild) in that country ; but would conclude that if the land had been left to itself, it would have produced grass and thistles, and no wheat at all. So, also, when you see men's natural character so opposite to the pure, and generous, and benevolent, and forgiving character of the Gospel, that even after they have received the Gospel, their lives are apt to be quite a contrast to Gospel virtue, you cannot think it likely that such a being as Man should have been the inventor of such a religion as the Christian.

§ 5. It is, indeed, strange that we should see men seeking to make amends for the want of Christian virtue by outward religious observances, and by active zeal,—often, bitter and persecuting zeal,—in the cause of Christianity ; when the very Founder of our faith has declared that He abhors such conduct ; so that such Christians, in professing to be followers of him, pronounce their own condemnation. This is certainly very strange ; but it shows, at least, how strong Man's natural tendency is to that error ; and it shows, therefore, how much more incredible it is that men should themselves have devised a religion which thus condemns their principles. All men, in short, and especially Christians, when they are leading an unchristian life, (I mean

a life on unchristian *principles*) are so far bearing witness that Christianity could not have come from men.

And the same may be said of the absurd extravagances into which some fanatical enthusiasts have fallen ; and which have given occasion to unbelievers to throw ridicule on Christianity. There is nothing of this wild and extravagant character in our sacred books. On the contrary, their sobriety and calmness of tone presents a striking contrast to what we see in some enthusiasts. So that their absurdities, instead of being an objection against the Gospel, are a proof, on the contrary, what a different thing the Gospel would have been if it had been the work of enthusiasts.

§ 6. To take another instance: it has been brought as an objection against Christianity that it has not spread over the whole world. It professes to be designed to enlighten and to improve all mankind; and yet, after nearly eighteen centuries, there still remains a very large portion of mankind who have not embraced it. All the most civilized nations, indeed, profess the Christian religion ; but there are many millions unconverted ; and the progress of the religion among these appears to be very slow. This may be thought very strange and unaccountable ; but at least it shows that the religion could not have been originally founded and propagated by mere human means. The nations professing Christianity

are now far more powerful and intelligent, and skilful in all the arts of life, than the rest of mankind; and yet though they send forth many active and zealous missionaries, the religion makes less progress in a century than it did in a few years, when it was preached by a handful of Jewish peasants and fishermen, with almost all the wealthy, and powerful, and learned, opposed to them. We cannot come near them in the work of conversion, though we have every advantage over them except in respect of miraculous powers. And, therefore, we have an additional proof, *that if they had not had such powers, they could not have accomplished what they did.*

§ 7. Again, there are objections against our Sacred books, occasioned by the mistake of some injudicious Christians, who have taken a wrong view of the *object* proposed in the Bible.

These persons imagine, and teach others to imagine, that we are bound to take our notions of astronomy, and of all other Physical Sciences, from the Bible. And accordingly, when astronomers discovered, and proved, that the earth turns round on its axis, and that the sun does not move round the earth, some cried out against this as profane, because Scripture speaks of the sun's rising and setting. And this probably led some astronomers to reject the Bible, because they were taught that if

they received *that* as a divine revelation, they must disbelieve truths which they had demonstrated.

So, also, some have thought themselves bound to believe, if they receive Scripture at all, that the earth, and all the plants and animals that ever existed on it, must have been created within six days, of exactly the same length as our present days. And this, even before the sun, by which we measure our days, is recorded to have been created. Hence, the discoveries made by geologists, which seem to prove that the earth and various races of animals must have existed a very long time before Man existed, have been represented as completely inconsistent with any belief in Scripture.

It would be unsuitable to such a work as this to discuss the various objections (some of them more or less plausible, and others very weak) that have been brought — on grounds of science, or supposed science — against the Mosaic accounts of the Creation — of the state of the early world — and of the Flood, and to bring forward the several answers that have been given to those objections. But it is important to lay down the PRINCIPLE on which either the Bible or any other writing or speech ought to be studied and understood: namely, with a reference to *the object proposed* by the writer or speaker.

For example; suppose you bid any one proceed in a straight line from one place to another, and to take care to arrive before the sun goes down. He

will rightly and fully understand you, in reference to the practical object which alone you had in view. Now, *you* perhaps know very well that there cannot really be a *straight line* on the surface of the earth, since its surface is curved ; and that the sun does not really *go down*, only, our portion of the earth is turned away from it. But whether the other person knows all this or not, matters nothing at all, with reference to your present object ; which was not to teach him mathematics or astronomy, but to make him conform to your directions, which are equally intelligible to the learned and the unlearned.

Now the object of the Scripture revelation is to teach men, not Astronomy or Geology, or any other Physical Science, but *Religion*. Its design was to inform men, not *in what manner* the world was made, but who made it ; and to lead them to worship Him, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, instead of worshipping his creatures, the heavens and earth themselves as gods ; which is what the ancient heathen actually did.

Although, therefore, Scripture gives very scanty and imperfect information respecting the earth and the heavenly bodies, and speaks of them in the language and according to the notions of the people of a rude age, still it fully effects the object for which it was given, when it teaches that the heavens and the earth are not gods to be worshipped, but that “ *God created the heavens and the earth,*” and that

it is He who made the various tribes of animals, and also man.

But as for astronomy and geology and other sciences, men were left—when once sufficiently civilized to be capable of improving themselves—to make discoveries in them by the exercise of their own faculties.

§ 8. But, it is also sometimes objected that our sacred books do not give any full and clear revelation of several very interesting particulars, which men would naturally wish and expect to find in them. For example, there is not only a very short and scanty account of the creation of the world, and of its condition before the flood; but there is little said about angels, and, what is more remarkable, there is no full and particular description given of a future state, and of the kind of life which the blest are to lead in Heaven. All these, and especially the last, are very curious and interesting matters; and being beyond the reach of Man to discover, it appears very strange to some persons, that books professing to contain a divine revelation should give so very brief and scanty an account of them, and leave such a natural curiosity unsatisfied.

Now this is a difficulty, which you may *hereafter*, on attentive reflection, be able completely to explain. You may find good reasons for deciding that this absence of all that goes to gratify mere curiosity, is just what might be expected in a revelation really

coming from God. But you may perceive *at once* that it is *not* to be expected in a pretended revelation devised by *Men*. An impostor seeking to gain converts by pretending to have received a divine revelation, would have been sure to tempt the curiosity of the credulous by giving them a full description of matters interesting to human minds. He would have sought to excite their feelings, and amuse their imaginations, by dwelling with all his eloquence on all the particulars of a future state, and on the nature and history of good and evil angels, and all those other things which are so scantily revealed in our Scriptures. And a wild enthusiast again, who should have mistaken his dreams and fancies for a revelation from Heaven, would have been sure to have his dreams and fancies filled with things relating to the invisible world ; on which a diseased imagination is particularly apt to run wild.

Even though you should be unable, therefore, to understand why the Scriptures should be such as they are in this respect, supposing them to come from God, you may, at least, perceive that they are not such as would have come from man. In this, as well as in many other points, they are just the reverse of what might have been expected from impostors or enthusiasts.

§ 9. Lastly, it is worth while to remember that all the difficulties of Christianity, which have been

brought forward as objections against it, are so far evidences in its favor, that the religion was introduced and established in *spite of them all*. Most of the objections which are brought forward in these days, had equal force—and some of them much greater force—at the time when the religion was first preached. And there were many others besides, which do not exist now; especially what is called “the reproach of the cross;” the scorn felt towards a religion, whose founder suffered a kind of death reckoned in those days the most disgraceful; and whose followers were almost all of them men of obscure station, of low birth, poor, unlearned, and without worldly power.

Yet in spite of all this the religion prevailed. And that it should have made its way as it did, against so many obstacles, and difficulties, and objections, is one of the strongest proofs, that it must have had some supernatural means of overcoming them, and that, therefore, it must have come from God.

LESSON XV.

MODERN JEWS. PART I.

§ 1. ONE of the difficulties with which the minds of some Christians are perplexed, is, that Jesus

Christ should have been rejected by the greater part of his countrymen, the Jews ; and that they who had been, according to our Scriptures, for so many ages, God's favored and peculiar people, should be, now, and for about seventeen centuries, without a country, and scattered as outcast strangers through the world.

Their present condition and past history are indeed something very extraordinary, and quite unlike what has befallen any other nation. But though we may not be able to explain all the circumstances relative to this wonderful people, it will be found on reflection, that they furnish one of the strongest evidences for the truth of the very religion which they reject.

You know that when the Jews received the law through Moses, they were promised success and prosperity as long as they should obey the Lord ; and that heavy judgments were denounced against them in case of disobedience. It was foretold that they should be defeated by their enemies, driven from their country, scattered abroad, and continually harassed and oppressed. These threats are set forth in various parts of the books of Moses, and most particularly in the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy. "Thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword among all the nations whither the Lord shall lead thee. . . . The Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even

great plagues of long continuance. . . . And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other."— ver. 37, 59, 64.

And the same is to be found in various parts of the writings of several of the prophets, who lived some ages after. In particular, there is one in Ezekiel, which agrees most remarkably in one very curious particular with the state of the Jews at this day ; namely, where he declares that they should, in the midst of their sufferings, remain a distinct people, unmixed with and unlike other nations; although it appears that, in his time, they were very much disposed to unite themselves with the rest of mankind, so as to become one of the Gentile nations, and to lay aside all the distinctions of their own race. "That which cometh into your mind shall not be at all, that ye say, We will be as the heathen, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone." (Ezekiel xx. 32.)

§ 2. Now we find in the Old Testament, that in several instances, these judgments did fall on the Jews ; and especially when they were carried away captive to Babylon. And some persons may suppose that these instances were all that Moses and the prophets had in view. But whatever any one's *opinion* may be, it is a *fact*, of which there can be no doubt, that the Jewish nation are actually suffering, at this day, such things as Moses and the prophets predicted. Whether Moses and Ezekiel had in view

what is now taking place, or not, may be a matter of opinion ; but it is a matter of fact, that what is now taking place does agree with their predictions. Jerusalem and its Temple were taken and burnt by the Romans, about forty years after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The Jews were driven from their country, and never allowed to settle in it again. Hundreds of thousands were sold as slaves ; and the whole people were cast forth as wanderers among the Gentiles ; and they have ever since remained a nation of exiles, unsettled, harassed, and oppressed, in many instances most cruelly, not only by Pagans and Mohammedans, but also (to our shame be it spoken) by Christian nations ; and still remaining a distinct people, though without a home.

§ 3. One of the most remarkable points relative to these predictions respecting the Jews, and their present condition, is this : that the judgments spoken of by Moses, were threatened in case of their departing from the law which he delivered, and especially, in case of their worshipping false gods ; and yet, though in former times they were so apt to fall into idolatry, they have always, since the destruction of Jerusalem, steadily kept clear of that sin ; and have professed to be most scrupulous observers of the law of Moses. And what is more, all the indignities and persecutions that any of them are exposed to, appear to be the *consequence* of their keeping to their religion, and not of their forsaking it. For a

Jew has only to give up his religion, and conform to that of the country he lives in, whether Christian, Mohammedan, or Pagan, and lay aside the observances of the law of Moses, and he immediately ceases to be reproached as a Jew, and an alien, and is mingled with the people around him. So that the Jews of the present day seem to be suffering for their *observance* of the law, just the penalties threatened for their *departure* from it.

At first sight this seems very hard to explain; but, on reflection, you will find the difficulty cleared up, in such a way as to afford a strong confirmation of your faith. First, you should observe, that the Jews themselves admit that a Christ or Messiah was promised them; and that to reject Him on his coming would be an act of rebellion against the Lord their God. Moses foretold that the Lord should raise up from among them a Prophet like Moses himself; and "whosoever should not hear that Prophet," God "would require it of him;" and "that he should be destroyed from among the people." (Deut. xviii. 15 - 19; Acts iii. 22, 23.) This is generally understood (as it is applied in the Acts) to relate to the Messiah or Christ; whom the other prophetic writers of the Old Testament, (as both Christians and Jews are agreed,) more particularly foretold and described. Now *we* hold that the Jews have been guilty of this very act of disobedience in rejecting the Christ. And though they, of

course, do not confess themselves thus guilty, because they deny that Jesus of Nazareth was the true Christ, yet they so far agree with us as to acknowledge, that the rejecting of the true Christ on his coming would be such a sin as would expose them to the judgments which Moses threatened.

To us, therefore, who do believe in Jesus, this affords an explanation of their suffering these judgments.

§ 4. But, secondly, besides this, you will perceive, on looking more closely, that the Jews of these days do *not* really observe the law of Moses, though they profess and intend to do so. They have, indeed, kept to the *faith* of their forefathers; but not to their religious *observances*. For, the chief part of the Jewish worship consisted in offering sacrifices distinctly appointed by the Lord Himself, in the law delivered by Moses. There was a sacrifice appointed to be offered up every day, and two on the Sabbath; besides several other sacrifices on particular occasions. Now, the modern Jews, though they abstain from certain meats forbidden in their law, and observe strictly the Sabbath and several other ordinances, yet do not offer any sacrifices at all; though sacrifices were appointed as the chief part of their worship.

The reason of this is, that they were strictly forbidden to offer sacrifices except in the *one place*, which should be appointed by the Lord for that pur-

pose. And the place last fixed on for these offerings having been the Temple at Jerusalem, which was destroyed about seventeen hundred years ago, and has never been restored, the Jews are now left without any place in which they can lawfully offer the sacrifices which their law enjoins.

§ 5. The Jews, accordingly, of the present day, plead that it is not from wilful disobedience that they neglect these ordinances, but because they cannot help it. But to say that it is not their own fault, that they do *not* observe the ordinances of their religion, is quite a different thing, from saying that they do observe them. They may explain *why* they cannot keep the law of Moses ; but they cannot say that they do keep it.

Now Christians hold that the ceremonies of that law were not originally designed to be observed by all nations, and for ever ; — that “ the law had only a shadow of good things to come,” (Heb. x. 1,) that is, of the Gospel ; and that it was designed that the sacrificing of lambs and bullocks should cease at the coming of the Christ. A Jew, on the contrary, will not allow that these were designed ever to cease ; but he cannot deny that they *have* ceased, and that, for above seventeen centuries. Let a Jew explain, if he can, how it is that for so long a time Providence has put it out of the power of the Jews to observe the principal part of their religion, which they maintain was intended to be observed for ever.

§ 6. And this also is very remarkable ; that the religion of the Jews is almost the only one, that *could* have been abolished *against the will* of the people themselves, and while they resolve firmly to maintain it. *Their* religion, and theirs only, could be, and has been, thus abolished in spite of their firm attachment to it, on account of its being dependent on a particular *place*, — the Temple at Jerusalem. The Christian religion, or again, any of the Pagan religions, could not be abolished by any force of enemies, if the persons professing the religion were sincere and resolute in keeping to it. To destroy a Christian place of worship, or to turn it into a Mohammedan mosque, (as was done in many instances by the Turks,) would not prevent the exercise of the Christian religion. And even if Christianity were forbidden by law, and Christians persecuted, (as has in times past been actually done,) still, if they were sincere and resolute, they might assemble secretly in woods or caves ; or they might fly to foreign countries to worship God according to their own faith ; and Christianity, though it might be driven out of one country, would still exist in others.

§ 7. And the same may be said of the Pagan religions. If it happened that any temple of Jupiter, or Diana, or Woden, were destroyed, this would not hinder the worshippers of those gods from continu-

ing to worship them as before, and from offering sacrifices to them elsewhere.

But it was not so with the Jews. Their religion was so framed as to make the observance of its ordinances impossible, when their Temple was finally destroyed. It seems to have been designed and contrived by Divine Providence, that as their *law* was to be brought to an end by the Gospel, (for which it was a preparation,) so all men were to *perceive* that it did come to an end, notwithstanding the obstinate rejection of the Gospel by the greater part of the Jews. It was not left to be a question, and a matter of *opinion*, whether the sacrifices instituted by Moses were to be continued or not; but things were so ordered, as to put it out of Man's power to continue them.

LESSON XVI.

MODERN JEWS. PART II.

§ 1. It is likely that when Jerusalem and its Temple were destroyed, several of the Jews who had till then rejected the Gospel, may have been at length converted, by the strong additional evidence which was thus afforded. They saw the heavy judgment that fell on their nation; and that it was *such as* to make the observance of their law im-

possible. They saw, also, that the event agreed with what Jesus had predicted forty years before. And they saw, too, that those of his followers who had been living in Jerusalem, had been enabled to escape destruction by following his directions, and fleeing to the mountains as soon as they saw Jerusalem encompassed by an army. It is, therefore, likely that several may have been led by this additional evidence to embrace the Christian faith. But of this we have no records ; as the book of Acts takes in only an earlier period. And in that book we have no particulars of the numbers of those Jews who were converted ; though it appears they must have amounted to many thousands ; indeed, many *myriads* ; that is, tens of thousands ; as is said in the original Greek of Acts xxi. 20. But still these made but a small portion only of that great nation. And as the Jewish Christians would soon become mingled with the Gentile Christians, and cease to be a separate people, hence all those who are known as Jews at this day, are the descendants of those who rejected the Gospel.

These are computed to amount, at the present time, notwithstanding the prodigious slaughter of them, at the taking of their city, and on several other occasions, to no less a number than 4,800,000, scattered through various parts of the world ; everywhere mixing and trading with other nations ; but everywhere kept distinct from them by their peculiar

faith and religious observances. And everywhere they preserve and read with the utmost reverence their sacred books, which foretell the coming of the Messiah, or Christ, at a time which (by their own computations) is long since past, namely, about the time when Jesus did appear. Their books foretell, also, such judgments as their nation is suffering; and foretell too, what is most remarkable, that notwithstanding all this they shall still remain a separate people, unmixed with the other nations.

§ 2. You should observe, too, that these prophecies are such as no one would ever have made by *guess*. Nothing could have been more unlikely than the events which have befallen the Jewish nation. Nothing like them has ever been foretold of any other nation; or has ever happened to any other. There are, indeed, many cases recorded in history, of one nation conquering another, and either driving them out of the country, or keeping them in subjection. But in all these cases, the conquered people who have lost their country, either settle themselves in some other land, or if they are wholly dispersed, generally become gradually mixed and blended with other nations; as, for example, the Britons and Saxons, and Danes and Normans, have been mixed up into one people in England.

The only people who at all resemble the Jews, in having been widely dispersed, and yet remaining *distinct*, are those commonly called Gipsies, and

whose proper name is Zinganies, or Jinganies. It has been made out that they are an East Indian nation, speaking a Hindoo dialect. And they are widely scattered through the world, keeping up their language, and some customs of their own, in all the countries through which they wander. They are certainly a very remarkable people; and if there had been any prophecy (which there was not) of their being thus dispersed, we might well have believed that such a prophecy must have come from inspiration.

But in some remarkable points their condition differs from that of the Jews, and is less unaccountable.

First, they do not (like the Jews) live in towns among other men, and in houses; but dwell in tents, by the road-sides, and on commons; leading the life of strolling tinkers, pedlars, and fortune-tellers. This roaming life, of course, tends to keep them separate from the people of the countries in which they are found.

§ 3. But, secondly, the chief difference is, that the Gipsies are always ready, when required, to profess the religion of the country, whether Christian or Mohammedan, or any other; seeming to have no religion of their own, and to be quite indifferent on the subject. The Jews, on the contrary, always, when they are allowed, settle in towns along with other men; and are kept distinct from them by their

religion, and by nothing else. They are the only people who are everywhere separated from the people of the country in which they live, entirely by their peculiar faith and religious observances; and *that*, too, though their religion is such, (which is the strongest point of all,) that the most important part of its ordinances — the sacrifices ordained in their law — *cannot* be observed by them.

The Jews, therefore, in their present condition, are a kind of standing miracle; being a monument of the wonderful fulfilment of the most extraordinary prophecies that were ever delivered; which prophecies they themselves preserve and bear witness to, though they shut their eyes to the fulfilment of them. No other account than this of the present state and past history of the Jews ever has been, or can be given, that is not open to objections greater than all the objections put together, that have ever been brought against Christianity.

§ 4. This, then, as well as several other difficulties in our religion, such as have been formerly mentioned, will be found, on examination, to be,—even when you cannot fully explain them,—not so much objections against the truth of your religion, as confirmations of it.

And when you do meet with any objection which you are at a loss to answer, you should remember, (as has been above said,) that there are many things which all men must believe, in spite of real difficul-

ties which they cannot explain, when there are much greater difficulties on the opposite side, and when sufficient proof has been offered.

And in the present case, you have seen that it is not only difficult, but impossible, to account for the rise and prevalence of the Christian religion, supposing it not to have come from God.

1. It certainly was introduced and propagated (which no other religion ever was ; for the religion taught by Moses we acknowledge as a *part* of our *own*) by an appeal to the evidence of miracles. Nothing but the display of superhuman powers could have gained even a hearing for the Apostles ; surrounded as they were by adversaries prejudiced against their religion by their early education, and habits of thought and inclinations, and hopes. And these superhuman powers were, as you have seen, acknowledged at the time by those adversaries, who were driven to attribute the Christian miracles to magic arts.

2. And you have seen, too, that the religion itself, and the character of Jesus Christ as drawn in the Christian Scriptures, and the whole of the narrative of those books, are quite different, and indeed opposite to what might have been expected from impostors or enthusiasts.

3. And lastly, you have seen that many of the difficulties that have been brought as objections against Christianity, turn out, on careful inquiry, to be an additional evidence of its truth.

Among others, this is remarkably the case with the difficulties relating to the history and condition of the Jewish nation. Though you may not be able fully to explain all the circumstances relating to that wonderful people, you may learn from them, what they refuse to learn from themselves, a strong proof of the truth both of their Scriptures, and of the Gospel which they obstinately reject. It is so ordered by Providence, that even that very obstinacy is made to furnish an additional proof of Christianity; by setting *them* forth before all the world as a monument of fulfilled prophecy.

§ 5. There are several other instructions and warnings also, which you may learn from attentively reflecting on the case of the Jews; and I will conclude by shortly mentioning a few of these.

First, — You should remember that when you see the Jews, both formerly, and now, obstinately keeping to the faith of their forefathers, merely because it is what they were brought up in, and refusing to listen to any reasoning on the subject of religion, a Christian has no right to wonder at, or to blame them, if he does the same thing himself; that is, if he is satisfied to take upon trust whatever he may have been told, and is resolved neither to seek nor to listen to any arguments that may enable him “to give a reason of the hope that is in him.” And the same may be said of Mohammedans and Pagans, as well as of Jews. Though the Christian happens

to have a *religion* that is right, *he* is not more right than they, if he goes on the same plan that they do. At least, he is right only by chance, if he holds a faith that is true, and holds it, not *because* it is true, but merely because it is that of his forefathers.

§ 6. Secondly, — You should remember that we are apt to make much less allowance for the unbelieving Jew than for Christians who lead an unchristian life; and that we *ought* to do just the contrary.

It is difficult for us, of these days, to understand and fully enter into the great difficulty which the Jews had (and still have) in overcoming all the prejudices they had been brought up in, and which were so flattering to their own nation as God's favored people. It was a hard task for them to wean themselves from all the hopes and expectations of temporal glory and distinction to that nation; hopes which they and their ancestors had cherished for so many ages. No doubt it was a grievous sin in them to give way to those prejudices, and to reject the Christ as they did. But it is a greater sin to acknowledge Him, as some Christians do, as their Lord and Master, and to "believe that He shall come to be our judge," and at the same time to take no care to obey his precepts, and copy the pattern of his life. This is more truly impiety than that with which an infidel is chargeable. For, suppose two men each received a letter from his father, giving directions for

his children's conduct; and that one of these sons, hastily, and without any good grounds, pronounced the letter a forgery, and refused to take any notice of it; while the other acknowledged it to be genuine, and laid it up with great reverence, and then acted without the least regard to the advice and commands contained in the letter; you would say that both of these men indeed were very wrong; but the latter was much the more undutiful son of the two.

Now this is the case of a disobedient Christian, as compared with infidels. He does not, like them, pronounce his father's letter a forgery; that is, deny the truth of the Christian revelation; but he sets at defiance in his life, that which he acknowledges to be the Divine command.

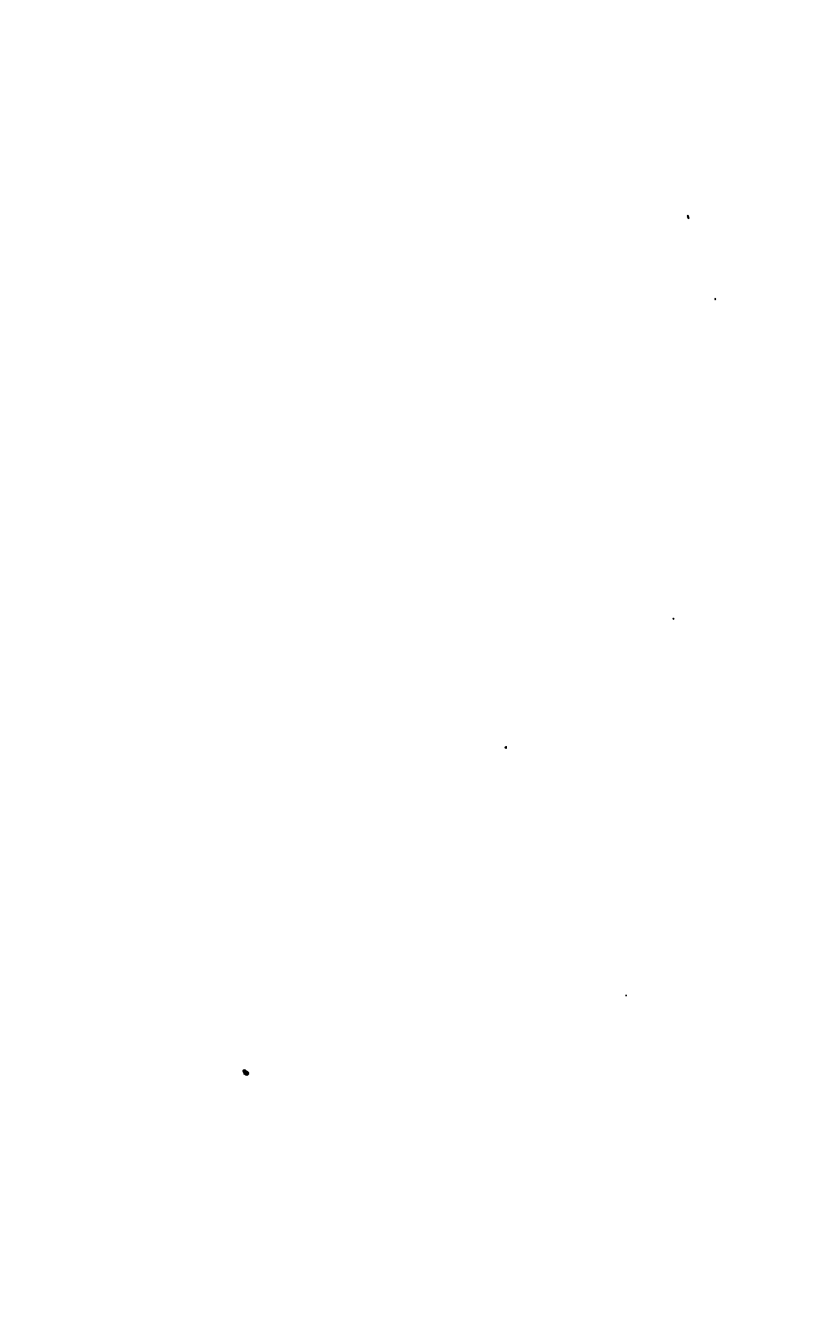
§ 7. Lastly, you should remember that no argument you can bring against unbelievers, will have greater weight with most of them, than a Christian life; and nothing, again, will be more likely to increase and confirm their unbelief, than to see Christians living in opposition to the precepts and spirit of the Gospel; and especially to see them indulging bitter and unkind and hostile and uncharitable feelings towards their fellow-creatures, and even their fellow-Christians.

The objection thence raised against the Christian religion, is indeed (as has been above said) not a real and sound one; but still it *will* be raised; and therefore you cannot too carefully consider how

much you will have to answer for, if you contribute to bring an ill name on your Christian faith ; and if you do not, on the contrary, endeavor to the utmost, “ to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.”



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